Status of the Eastern Brown Pelican in South Carolina

By Philip M. Wilkinson

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ABSTRACT

Band recoveries from pelicans banded in South Carolina during the past 50 years were analyzed. Computer printouts were summarized and put in tabular form. Maps and graphs were made showing recoveries by location, month of recovery, and general ages of birds recovered.

For purposes of this report, banding records from 1931 to 1980 (n=17,603) were analyzed. There were 1,340 band recoveries (7.6%) from these bandings. Most band recoveries from South Carolina-banded pelicans were from Florida (n=858), followed by South Carolina (n=313), North Carolina (n=80), Georgia (n=50) and Cuba (n=29). South Carolina pelicans recovered in Florida were almost exclusively from Florida's east coast.

The month of highest recovery rate was in January followed by December, February and March. The months of lowest band recovery rate were May and September. Band recoveries were highest in Florida in the fall, winter and spring, and highest in South Carolina in summer. The time and rate of band recovery by region indicate South Carolina pelicans largely winter in Florida and spend their summers in South Carolina. Band returns substantiate high juvenile mortality rates, which tend to level off after the birds are 4 years of age.

Loafing sites were assessed along the South Carolina coast to determine the feasibility of capturing adult pelicans by means of a rocket-net system. Indications were that it was not feasible to rocket-net pelicans on loafing areas.

One thousand two hundred ninety-six preflight pelicans were marked over a period of 3 years (1979-1981) on their natal rookeries. The juvenile pelicans were individually marked with a combination of leg and wing markers to enable each bird to be recognized from a distance. These marked pelicans were observed during monthly coastal flights. Reports of color-marked pelicans were also received by mail and phone from persons who observered them during all seasons in four states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida).

There were 413 reports of pelican sightings that were specially marked as juveniles on South Carolina rookeries. The most frequently reported observations were of wing-marked pelicans (n=387). Survival of these marked pelicans and/or their markers was low after their first winter. The marked juveniles were observed both north and south of the rookeries along the coast shortly after fledging. In late August sighting reports indicated a general movement south along the coast. Sighting recoveries were high along the Georgia coast in September and October. In November and December sightings were highest from the north to central east coast of Florida. In late winter and early spring these juveniles were most often sighted from the central east coast of Florida to the Florida Keys.

One marked pelican nested at 1 year of age. Two nested as 2-year-olds, ten as 3-year-olds, five as 4-year-olds and one nesting pelican still retained its marker after 5 years.

Seasonal abundance indicated pelican numbers in South Carolina were lowest in January and February and highest in May, June and July.

Monthly coastal aerial surveys were conducted to determine pelican numbers in South Carolina. Nest counts were made from aerial photographs

and ground surveys. Reproductive success was determined by ground counts of preflight young.

The number of nesting pelicans in South Carolina has generally increased from 1970 (N=1,116) until the present (n=5,100). Fledgling success increased similarly during the same period. The lowest fledgling success was in 1970 (n=945) and the highest in 1984 (n=6,700).



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INTRODUCTION

In the late 1960's the Eastern Brown Pelican (Pelecanus occidentalis carolinsis) experienced a population decline in South Carolina and in many other parts of its range. The decline was thought by some to be caused by various pesticides that were heavily used at that time. Generally, however, the decline was poorly understood, so there were few, if any, remedies for it. As a result, the Eastern Brown Pelican was listed as endangered in 1974. Several factors hindered accurate assessment of the pelicans' plight. One factor was a lack of knowledge about their nesting ecology. Little was known about the age composition of nesters in the colonies, whether pairs renested when nests were destroyed, the nest attendance of a nesting pair or the distances they traveled from the colonies when feeding. Nesting interchange between colonies was also poorly understood.

There are no previous records of statewide pelican surveys in South Carolina. No attempts have been made to determine the numbers of pelicans using the state's coastal areas during any season of the year. Nest counts and in some cases, fledgling counts have been made in the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (CRNWR) annually since the late 1930s.

Becket (1966) censused nesting pelicans on Deveaux Bank in 1964 and CRNWR personnel censused nesting pelicans in the refuge during the same year, but there is no evidence that these counts were standardized or coordinated.

Blus et al. (1979) counted nests and numbers of fledglings in all South Carolina rookeries from 1969 through 1976. This was the first effort

toward determining the statewide population status of pelicans in South Carolina.

To determine some of the nesting ecology parameters, a method of marking individually recognizable nesting adults was needed. In the past, techniques have been developed, sometimes with limited success, for marking game birds for individual recognition. Knowlton et al. (1964) had limited success in marking wild turkeys with colored leg markers of the type described by Downing and Marshall (1959). Back tag markers similar to those described by Blank and Ash, (1956) and evaluated by Labisky and Mann (1962) and Gullion et al. (1962), were not satisfactory because the markers became obscured by the long contour feathers on the turkeys' backs.

Knowlton et. al. (1964) placed plasticized nylon markers on the patagium of each wing of 242 turkeys to mark the animals for subsequent individual recognition in the field. His turkeys could be individually identified at distances of up to 183 meters. After 12 to 16 months, only two turkeys had one wing marker missing.

During 2 years of field trials, Anderson (1963) found various species of waterfowl could be individually identified up to 150 meters by means of a colored, semirigid plastic material attached to the patagium of each wing.

Bruce Hanson of the Northern Prairie Research Station (Pers. Comm.) has successfully used a "Lyn Ply Plastic" leg band that allowed Canada Geese to be individually recognized for up to four years.

Schreiber (1976) placed colored leg and wing streamers on brown pelican nestlings. The material became worn and frayed and did not remain on the birds for more than 6 to 9 months. Nesbitt (1979) tested four potential

wing marker materials for color fastness and durability. The materials were subjected to severe artificial conditions.

When marking pelicans, several factors must be considered: first, how to capture the sample population to be marked; second, where to attach the marker so that it is visible; and third, finding a material that can withstand the deteriorating effects of salt water and the wear caused by the birds diving and feeding activities.

Birds captured for marking studies may also be banded with regular U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum bands. This requires little extra effort and can yield additional information. In the past 50 years over 17,000 juvenile pelicans have been banded in South Carolina. This effort has not yielded significant insight into the biology of the species simply because no one has analyzed the band return data.

Surveys to determine seasonal population status, nesting effort, and reproductive success were conducted using several types of aircraft.

During the nesting season ground nest counts in the rookeries were conducted immediately following the aerial surveys for the purpose of comparing the two methods of counting nests. The banding analysis, marking studies and population monitoring were undertaken to determine the overall status of the pelican population in South Carolina during all seasons of the year.

Pelicans have nested on as many as 11 different sites in South Carolina since 1900 (Blus et al.1979).

The most important of these rookeries were: Egg Bank in St. Helena Sound, Deveaux Bank at the mouth of the North Edisto River, Bird Island in Bulls Bay, Marsh Island in Bulls Bay, and Bird-Key Stono at the mouth of

the Stono River. These islands have gone through cycles of accretion and erosion during the course of their existence, however; only Deveaux Bank has completely eroded away (Fig. 1). These rookeries have supported some of the largest numbers of nesting pelicans recorded on the east coast.

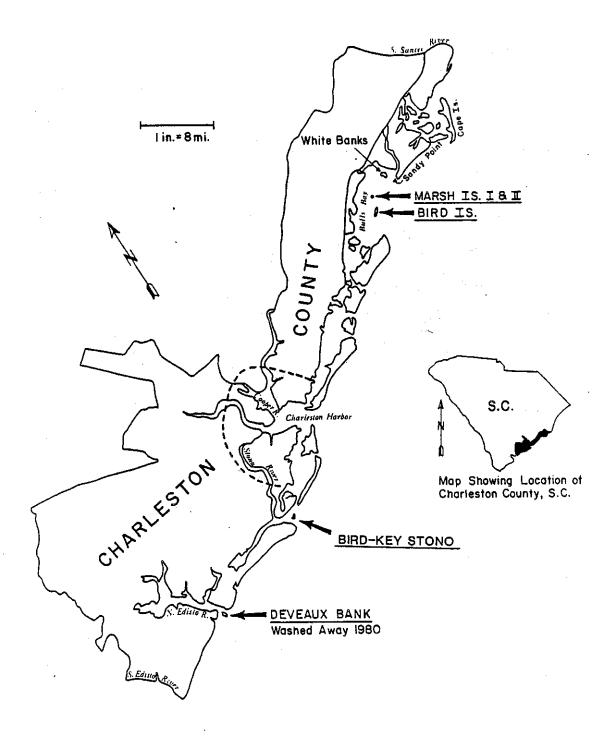
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Fig. 1 Map of Current (1984) Brown Pelican Breeding Colonies in South Carolina



METHODS

Banding Analysis

We analyzed band recoveries from the 17,603 pelicans banded in South Carolina during the past 50 years. Computer printouts were summarized and/or put in tabular form. Maps were made showing recoveries by location, month of recovery, and general age of birds recovered. For recovery maps, movements, and band recovery rate, no general deletions were made in the analysis. Recoveries with any of the following characteristics were deleted: (1) colony mortalities where banding Lat./Long. and recovery Lat./Long. were the same, the recovery month was earlier than August, and the banding year was the same as the recovery year, (2) when the bird's age was unknown, (3) where mortality was questionable, and (4) when the recovery (how obtained) was due to skeletal remains, so the information obtained was vague or insufficient. All birds considered in the analysis were "locals" and were incapable of sustained flight when banded. These birds were aged according to a l August-31 July calendar. In year-specific mortality, August 1 is used as the beginning day of each year.

Mark Adults

Flights in a Cessna 180 were made monthly from January through July, 1978, to determine locations along the South Carolina coast regularly used by pelicans for loafing. Each loafing site was assessed as to its accessibility, nearness to cover, suitability for boat anchorage, distance

from a rookery and the degree of human disturbance on it. After suitable areas were found, further reconnaissance by boat determined the time of day, stage of tide, and with what regularity pelicans used each of the locations.

Six locations in lower Winyah Bay in Georgetown County where pelicans were regularly seen loafing were selected to test a rocket-net system. The capture device was a nylon rocket-net system. The net measured 43 feet by 57 feet, had a mesh size of 2 inches square, and was fitted with a 2 foot fringe to prevent captured animals from escaping from under the edge of the net. The net was propelled by four recoilless net-trap rockets. The net was setup on a level area that exceeded the length and width.

The four rocket launchers were spaced at equal distances along the back edge of the net. The two corner rockets were aimed outward about 35 degrees from a line perpendicular to the net. The tie down lines from the trailing edge of the net were fastened to sandbags. When possible the apparatus was placed in position that allowed it to fire the rockets in the direction of the wind.

Marking Juveniles

One thousand two hundred ninety-six preflight pelicans were marked over a period of 3 years (1979-1981). In 1979 fledgling pelicans were marked with orange wing markers with white numbers. One hundred fifty fledglings on Marsh Island in Bulls Bay were marked on the left wings, while 150 fledglings on Deveaux Bank were marked on the right wings. Wing markers on birds hatched from Marsh Island had white letters in a series from CO1

through COO, and E5I through EOO. The markers used on fledglings from Deveaux Bank were also orange, lettered in a series of white numbers from AOI through AOO, and EOI through E5O. Each pelican was also affixed with an orange Lin-Ply Plastic leg band with white numbers that matched those on the wing marker. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum butt-end bands were placed on the other leg opposite to the colored leg band.

In 1980 the colored leg bands were not used. One hundred forty-five yellow wing markers with dark green lettering were placed on the left wing of fledgling pelicans on Marsh Island in Bulls Bay. They were numbered in a series from J01 through J00 and from K01 through K49. Similar markers (151) were placed on the right wing of fledglings on Bird-Key Stono. They were numbered K50 through K00, and T01 through T00. Regular U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands were placed on the left leg.

Wing markers were not used in 1981. Instead, international orange plastic leg bands were used. One hundred fifty bands lettered <u>01</u> through <u>00</u> (line below) and <u>01</u> through <u>50</u> (line above) were placed on the right legs of birds on Marsh Island. The same number of markers (150) were placed on the left legs of hatchlings on Bird-Key Stono. Their number series was <u>51</u> through <u>00</u> (line above), and <u>01</u> through <u>00</u> (line below). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands were placed on the other leg opposite to the colored leg bands.

In 1978, 400 fledglings were banded with aluminum interlocking bands on their right legs and aluminum butt-end bands on their left legs.

Monitoring

Marked pelicans were observed and counted during monthly coastal flights. Reports of color-marked pelicans were received by mail and phone from persons who observed them during all seasons in four states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida). These observations, along with our own, were mapped to show when and where the birds were seen, which sometimes indicate direction of movement.

Surveys to Monitor Seasonal Population Trends, Nesting Effort and Nesting Success.

Monthly aerial surveys were conducted along the coast to determine pelican numbers in South Carolina. Aerial photographs of colonies during the nesting season were taken at altitudes of 200 to 500 feet to determine nesting effort. Nest counts were also made from the ground and compared with counts made from aerial photographs. Reproductive success was determined by ground counts of preflight young and information obtained from the nesting efforts of adults.

RESULTS

Banding Analysis of South Carolina-Banded Eastern Brown Pelicans

Eastern Brown Pelicans in South Carolina were first banded in 1931 and have been banded during 36 of the past 54 years for total of 18,898 banded pelicans. For purposes of this report banding records from 1931 through 1980 (n=17,603) were analyzed (Table 1). During this period there were 1,340 band recoveries (7.6%), and most of these were from Florida (n=858), followed by South Carolina (n=313), North Carolina (n=80), Georgia (n=50) and Cuba (n=29)(Table 2).

bands up to 1980

Table 1. Number of Pelicans Banded in South Carolina by Year Banded.

Year	No. Banded	
1931	37	
1932	.98	
1935	31	
1938	40	
1939	60	
1940	74	
1941	102	14 banding years spanning 31 years
1942	90	
1946	200	
1947	50	
1950	683	·
1956	100	
1959	73	
1961	<u> 200</u>	•
Total	1,838	10%
1000		
1963	1267	
1964	1572	
1965	16.74	
1966	1221	
1967	826	
1968 1969	860 1158	
1970	643	
1971	857	
1972	705	18 banding years spanning 18 years
1973	707	to panding leafs shauming to leafs
1974	1403	
1975	890	
1976	400	
1977	400	
1978	399	
1979	483	
1980	<u>300</u>	
Total	15,765	90%

Total of 32 banding years spanning 50 years

Total pelicans banded in all years, 17,603

Table 2. Pelican Recoveries from 1931 - 1980.

Area	No. of Recoverie	s
FL	858	
GA	50	
NC	80	
SC	313	
VA	1	
AL	1	
LA	1	
HON	1	
BAH IS	5	
CUB .	29	
JAM	1	
	Total 1,340	

Recovery Areas. - Figures 2 through 11 and the accompanying Table 3 illustrate recovery areas along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida of pelicans of various age classes.

Initially, young pelicans (0-2 months old) were recovered on or near the rookery where they had been banded (Fig. 4). More returns were received from the vicinity of the Deveaux Bank rookery than rookeries in Bulls Bay because of the higher potential for human encounter on the more developed beaches near Deveaux Bank.

Recoveries were highest of pelicans 3 months to 1 year old in Florida, suggesting that most South Carolina pelicans spend their first winter on the east coast of Florida.

The band recovery rate from South Carolina and points south was much greater (95.3%) than that from areas to the north (4.7%). Most recoveries reported north of South Carolina occurred near the mouth of the Cape Fear River in North Carolina (Fig. 3). In South Carolina the area of highest band recovery was near the mouth of the North Edisto River. These recoveries were primarily from pelicans associated with the Deveaux Bank rookery. Charleston Harbor supports a large number of pelicans and also had a high band recovery rate. In Florida recoveries were distributed along the entire east coast, but the highest recoveries were from Talbot Island, Daytona Beach, New Smyrna Beach, Merritt Island, Melbourn, Fort Pierce and the Miami area.

Table 3. Eastern Brown Pelican Band Recoveries Showing Age of Bird and Where Recovered.

North Carolina

			Ag	e of R	ecovery	in M	onths
No.*	Lat./Long.	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
1	0361-0754	Currituck Sound		1			1
2	0355-0753	Nags Head, Bodie Is.		1	•	1	2
3	0354-0753	Oregon Inlet		1			1
4	0352-0753	Outer Banks, Avon, Gull Is.			3	1	4
5	0351-0753	Cape Hatteras				1	2
6	0 35 0-0 75 5	Ocracoke		1	1	3	5
7	0350-0760	Portsmouth Is.		3	3	1	7
8	0345-0761	Core Banks, Swash Inlet		1	3	2	6
9	0344-0762	Core Sound			. 2		2
10	0343-0761	Cape Lookout		2			2
11	0344-0763	Beaufort, Beaufort Inlet		2	2	1	5
12	0344-0764	Moorehead City, Bogue Sound	2				2
13	0344-0765	Bogue Sound		2			2
14	0343-0772	New River, New River Inlet		1			1
15	0343-0773	Inland W. of New River		1			1
16	0341-0773	Old Topsail Inlet		2			2
17	0341-0774	Wrightsville, Rich Inlet		2			- 2
18	0341-0775	Wilmington, Cape Fear River		3			3

^{*} Numbers refer to locations on maps, Fig. 3-11.

No.	* Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	. 3-11	12-23	24+	Total
19	0340-0781	Inland W. of Cape Fear		2	1		3
20	0340-0775	Cape Fear River, Sea Breeze		5	1	2	8
21	0335-0780	Southport, Oak Is.	1	6		1	8
22	0335-0775	Cape Fear, Smith Is.			1		1
23	0335-0781	Lockwoods Folly Inlet		2			2
24	0335~0782	Tubbs Inlet, Shallotte Inlet		4			4
25	0335-0783	Little River Inlet		2			<u>2</u> 78
Sout	h Carolina						
26	0334-0784	North of Myrtle Beach	1	1			2
27	0334-0785	Myrtle Beach		6	3		9
28	0333-0785	Surfside Beach	1	1			. 2
29	0333-0790	Murrells Inlet		5	1	2	8
30	0332-0790	Litchfield Bch., N. of North Inlet	1	2	2		
31	0332-0791	North Inlet		2		1	3
32	0331-0791	North Island, Winyah Bay		3		2	5
33	0330-0790	Off of South Island		1		٠,	1
34	0330-0792	Cape Is., Raccoon Key		4		2	6
35	0330-0793	Bulls Bay near White Banks		3		1	4
36	0325-0793	Bulls Bay, Marsh & Bird Islands	12	î	2	6	21
37	0325-0792	Offshore Bulls Bay	1				1
38	0330-0795	Upper Cooper River			1		1

No.*	Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
39	0330-0801	Upper Ashley River				1	1
40	0325-0794	Capers & Dewees Is.		1		1	2
41	0324-0794	Isle of Palms, Dewees Inlet	1	2	1	2	6
42	0325-0800	Ashley River	÷	1			1
43	0325-0795	Wando & Cooper Rivers		3	1		4
44	0324-0795	Charleston Harbor	5	28	5	10	48
45	0324-0800	Stono River		2			2
46	0324-0801	Wadmalaw River	1				1
47	0323-0795	Stono Inlet, Folly Is.	4	4	2	5	15
48	0323-0800	Kiawah & Seabrook Is.	13	1		5	19
49	0323-0801	Seabrook Is., Deveaux Bank, N. Edisto Is.	54	11	10	13	88
50	0323-0802	S. Edisto River, N. Otter Is., Hutchinson Is.		1			1
51	0323-0804	N. Broad River, Coosaw River, Port Royal Is.	1	2		1	4
52	0323-0810	N.W. of Ridgeland	8				8
53	0322-0800	E. of St. Helena Snd.	8				8
54	0322-0802	Fripp Inlet, St. Helena Snd.	3	3		5	11
55	0321-0802	Fripp Island		1		1	2
56	0322-0803	Beaufort River	1			1	2
57	0322-0804	Broad River, Port Royal, Parris Is.		2			2
58	0321-0803	St. Phillip & Pritchard Islands			1	1	. 2
59	0321-0804	Hilton Head \Is.			5 2	5	12

No.*	Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
60	0320-0805	Savannah River, Jones & Dafuskie Is.				1	. 1
					÷		3 08
Geor	gia			.*			
61	0320-0805	McQueens & Tybee Is., Savannah River		1		2	3
62	0320-0810	Hutchinson Is., Savannah River		6			. 6
63	0315-0805	Wassaw & Little Tybee Is., Wassaw Snd.		8	1	2	. 11
64	0315-0810	Skidaway & Little Wassaw Is., Ossabaw Snd.	• .	•	1	3	4
65	0314-0810	St. Catherines Snd.	•			1	I
66	0313-0810	Eastern portion of St. Catherines Is.	1				1
67	0313-0811	N. Sapelo Is., Sapelo River		1	1	2	4 .
68	0313-0822	Offerman, Pierce & Wayne Co.		1			1
69	0312-0811	Sapelo Is., Doboy Snd.			1	2	. 3
70	0311-0811	Altamaha Snd.				1	1
71	0311-0812	St. Simons Is.				2	2
72	0310-0813	Colonels & South Is.		1	:		. 1
73	0310-0812	Brunswick & Jeckyll Is.		5			5
74	0305-0812	N. part of Cumberland Is., St. Andrews Snd.	1	2	1	4	
75	0304-0812	St. Marys Entrance				1	1
							48

No.*	Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
<u>Flori</u>	.da						
76	0304-0812	Fernandina Beach		10		2	12
77 .	0303-0812	Amelia Is., S. Amelia River		5	3	3	11
78	0303-0813	Nassau River W. of Amelia Is.		2			2
79	0302-0812	Talbot Is.		25	1	5	31
80	0302-0813	St. Johns River, Reddie Point		1		3	4
81	0302-0814	N.W. of St. Johns River, Garden City			1		1
82	0301-0812	Jacksonville Beach	1	13	1	5	20
83	0301-0814	W. of St. Johns River, Wesconsett		10	3	4	17
84	0300-0814	Orange Park, Doctors Inlet	ř	I	1		2
85	0300-0811	Offshore, Guano River		4	1	1	6
86	0300-0812	Guano Canal		2		:	2
87	0295-0811	St. Augustine Inlet		14	2	3	19
88	0295-0812	Tolomoto River W. of St. Augustine		19		4	23
89	0294-0811	S. Anastasia Is., Matazas River		12	2	2	16
90	0294-0812	W. of Crescent Beach		1			1
91	0293-0811	Matanzas River, Marineland		2			2
92	0293-0810	E. of Matanzas River		5			5
93	0292-0810	Ormond by the Sea, N. of Daytona Beach		6	1	3	10
94	0291-0810	Ormond, Daytona Beach		31	2	1	34



No.*	Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
95	0290-0805	Ponce de Leon Inlet, New Smyrna Beach		38	4	6	48
96	0290-0810	W. of Ponce de Leon		I			1
97	0290-0800	E. of Ponce de Leon Inlet		1			1
98	0285-0804	Indian River North, N. end of Mosquito Lagoon		8	3	2	13
[*] 99	0284-0804	S. Mosquito Lagoon, N. Indian River		3		1	4
100	0283-0804	Titusville, N. Merrit Is.		10	2	2	14
101	0283-0805	Loughmans Lake				. 2	2
102	0282-0802	Off Canaveral Peninsula		2		4	6
103	0282-0803	Canaveral Peninsula		25	3	1	29
104	0282-0804	Merritt Is., Cocoa		40	4	5	49
105	0281-0803	Cocoa Beach		23	3	8	34
106	0280-0803	Melbourne, Indian River	+	48	6	8	62
107	0280-0802	Offshore of Melbourne Beach				1	1
108	0280-0804	W. of Melbourne, Indian River		1			1
109	0275-0803	Indian River, Sebastian Creek		8	2		10
110	0275-0802	Indian River, Sebastian Inlet		7	1	1	9
111	0274-0802	Wabasso, Winter Beach, Indian River		22	5		27
112	0273-0802	Vero Beach, Indian River		11	4	3	18
113	0273-0801	Indian River Shoal		1			1
114	0272-0801	S. Indian River, Ft. Pierce		36	4	7	47

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No.*	Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
115	0272-0802	Ft. Pierce		I			1
116	0271-0801	S. Indian River, Jensen Beach		20	1	5	26
117	0271-0800	S. Indian River, St.Lucie Inlet				1	1
118	0270-0800	Hobe Sound		5	1		6
119	0270-0801	Salerno, St. Lucie Canal		8	1		9
120	0265-0800	Jupiter Inlet		10	2		12
121	0264-0800	W. Palm Beach, Palm Beach		25	1	3	29
122	0263-0800	Lake Worth, Lantana		13		2	15
123	0262-0800	Delray Beach, Boca Raton		2		1	3
124	0261-0800	Hillsboro Inlet, Pompano Beach		8	2		10
125	0260-0800	Ft. Lauderdale, Everglades	,	13	2		15
126	0260-0801	W. of Ft.Lauderdale		4	1		5
127	0255-0800	Golden Beach		2			2
128	0255-0801	N. Miami, Little River		1		1	2
129	0254-0800	Miami Beach, Key Biscayne		24	2	1	27
130	0254-0801	Miami, Coral Gables		27	2	3	32
131	0253-0801	Eastern Biscayne Bay			1		1
132	0252-0801	Elliott Key, Old Rhodes Key		2			2
133	0252-0802	E. tip Florida, W.of Keys		3		1 .	4
134	0251-0802	Barnes Sound		1			1
135	0250-0802	Rodriquez Key, Rock Harbor		4	2	1	7



No.*	Lat./Long	General Area	0-2	3-11	12-23	24+	Total
136	0245-0803	Plantation, Upper Matacumbie Key		5 ·			5
137	0245-0804	Lower Matacumbie Key			l		1
138	0244-0804	Long Key		1			1
139	0244-0805	Duck & Grassy Key		1			1
140	0244-0810	Boot & Vaca Key		4	2	1	7
141	0244-0812	Big Prince, Torch & Content Key		1			1
142	0243-0813	Key West, Boca China Key		3			3
143	0251-0810	Cape Sable		1			1
144	0260-0814	Naples			1		1
145	0265-0820	Port Charlotte				1	1
146	0281-0830	W. of Pasco Cnty.		1			1
147	0300-0841	Apalachee Bay	•			1	1
148	0295-0842	Peninsula Point		1			$\frac{1}{830}$

State Totals

North Carolina	/6
South Carolina	308
Georgia	48
Florida	<u>830</u> 1,264

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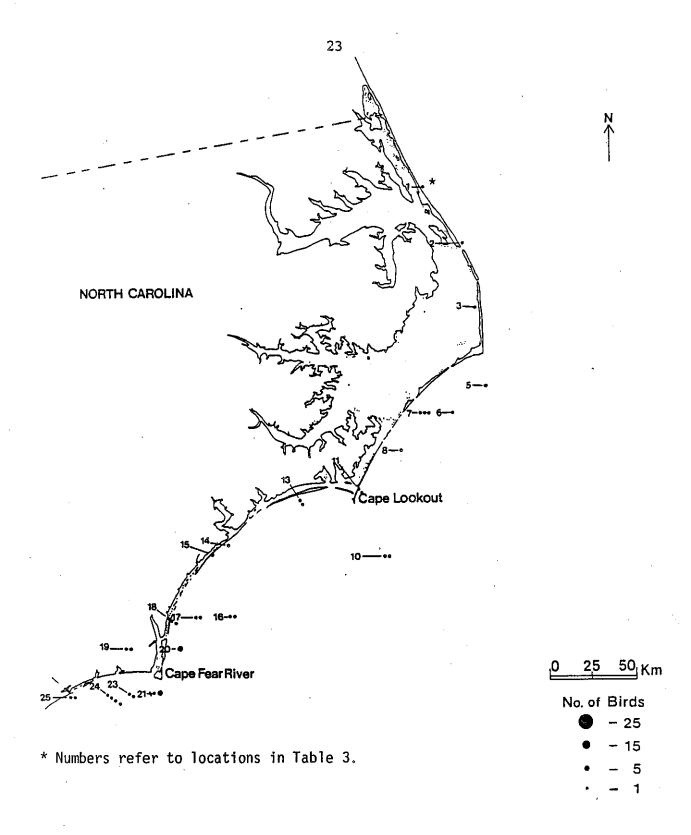


Fig. 2 North Carolina, recoveries of 3- to 11- month-old pelicans.

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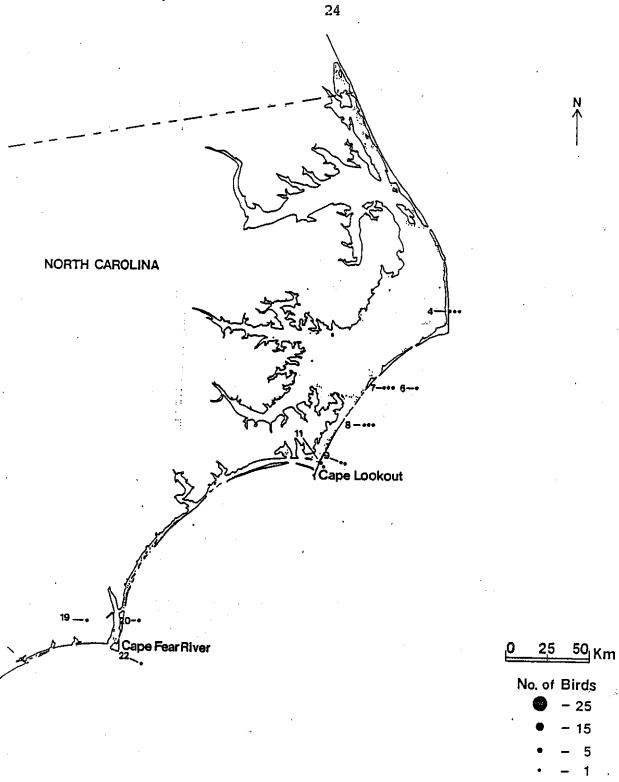


Fig. 3 North Carolina, recoveries of 12- to 23- month-old pelicans.

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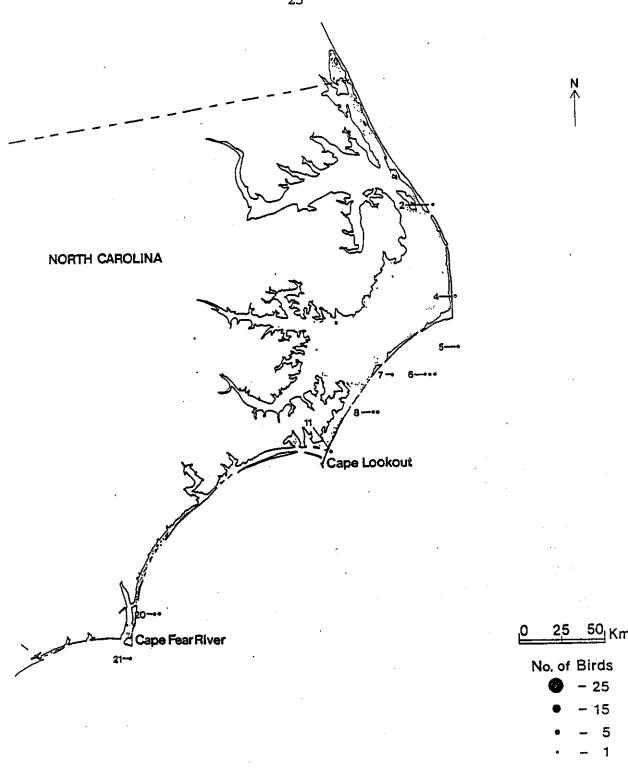


Fig. 4 North Carolina, recoveries of 24- month-old and older pelicans.

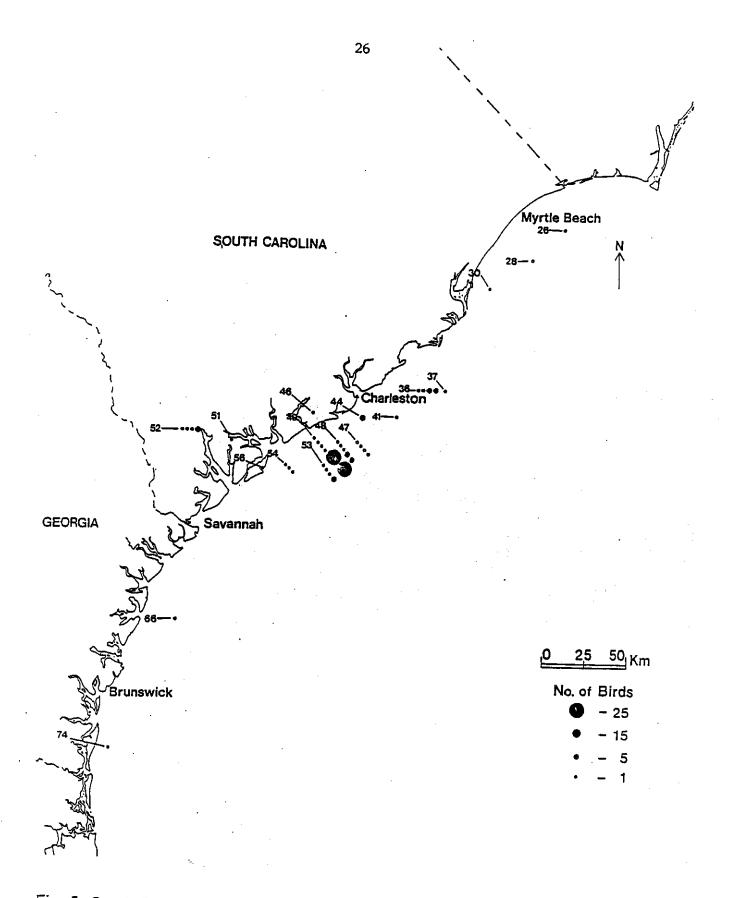


Fig. 5 South Carolina and Georgia recoveries of 0- to 2- month-old pelicans.

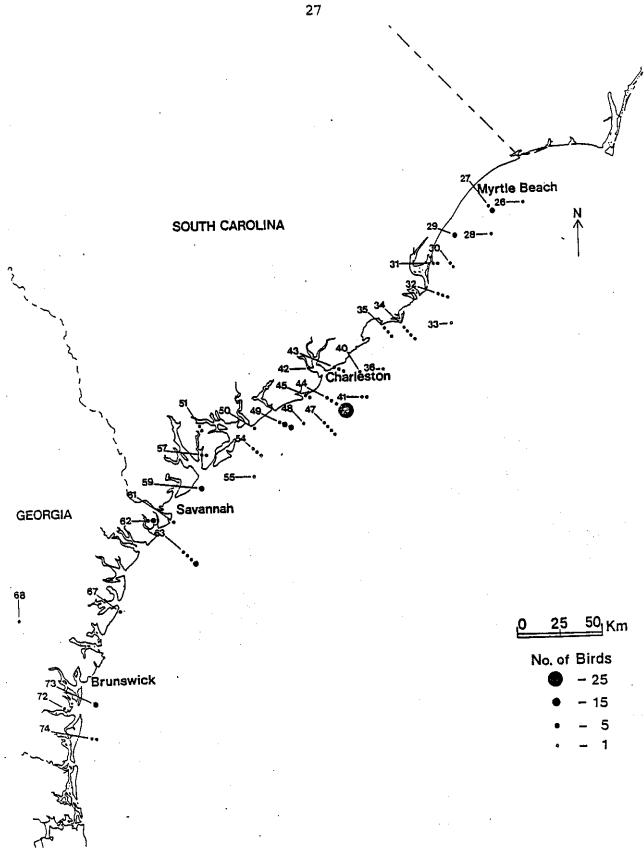


Fig. 6 South Carolina and Georgia, recoveries of 3- to 11- month-old pelicans.

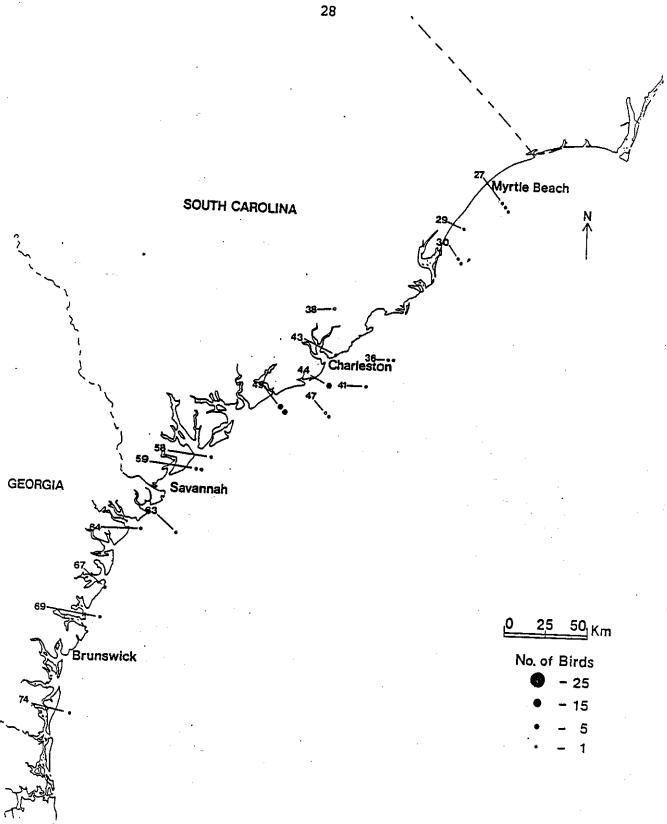


Fig. 7 South Carolina and Georgia, recoveries of 12- to 23- month-old pelicans.

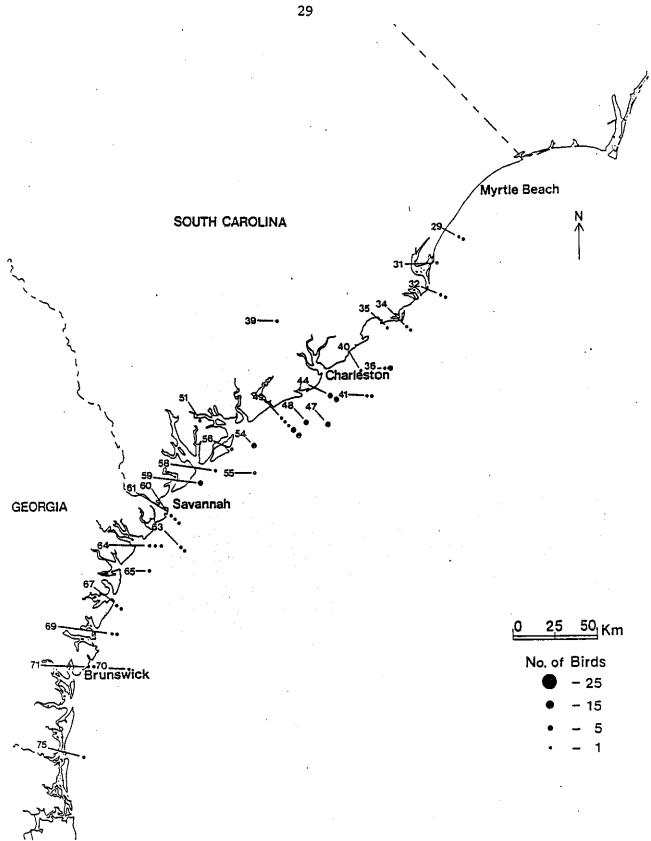


Fig. 8 South Carolina and Georgia, recoveries of 24- month-old an older pelicans.

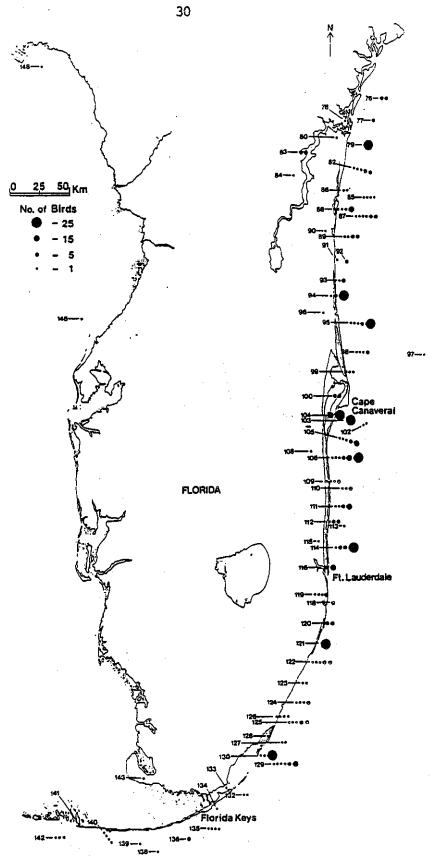


Fig. 9 Florida, recoveries of 3- to 11- month-old pelicans.

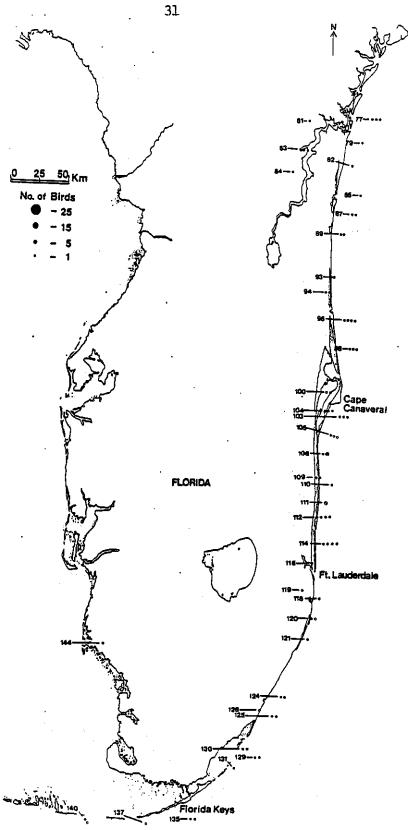


Fig. 10 Florida, recoveries of 12- to 23- month-old pelicans.

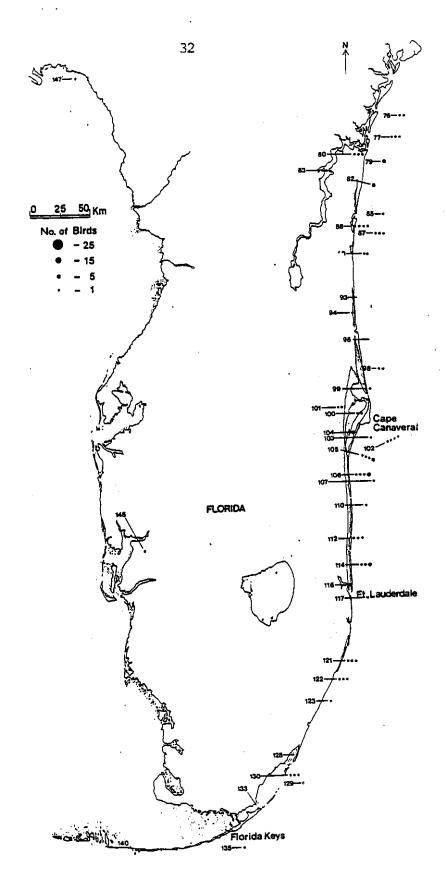


Fig. 11 Florida, recoveries of 24- month-old and older pelicans.

Time of Recovery. There were 1,206 band recoveries where the time of recovery was reported. The highest recovery rate was in January (n=212), followed by December (n=211), February (n=191) and March (n=123). The lowest band recovery rates were in May (n=37) and September (n=32) (Table 4).

Table 4. Number of Bands Recovered from South Carolina-Banded Pelicans by Month Recovered (1931-1980).

Recovery Month	Number Recovered
January	212
February	191
March	123
April	87
May	37
June	58
July	56
August	88
September	32
October	42
November	69
December	<u>211</u>
2001-301	Total 1,206

Time of Recovery by Region. - A comparison of band recoveries from within South Carolina by month to recoveries reported outside of the state shows recovery rates are higher outside of South Carolina from October through May, and higher within South Carolina from June through September (Table 5).

These data suggest most South Carolina hatched pelicans spend their winters outside of the state. However, recoveries were reported within the state during every month, so all pelicans do not leave South Carolina during the winter.

Most band recoveries outside of South Carolina were reported from the east coast of Florida. Band recoveries were highest in Florida in the fall, winter and spring, and highest in South Carolina in the summer. The times and rates of band recoveries by region indicate pelicans hatched in South Carolina largely winter in Florida and spend their summers in South Carolina (Fig. 12).

Mortality. - Reported causes of mortality are often vague, such as "found dead", and unreliable, so this aspect of the data on recoveries cannot be emphasized. However, some implications may be drawn.

Of all bird recoveries in Florida, 80.3% were first-year birds. Of all birds recovered in South Carolina, 71.5% were first-year birds. The combined mortality rates of first-year birds for both states is 78% (n=626/803).

Mortalities occur with the greatest frequency among first year birds in Florida in December and January (Fig.13).

Band returns substantiate high juvenile mortality rates which tend to level off after the birds are 4 years of age (Fig. 14). However, care must be taken when drawing conclusions from band returns concerning life expectancy because of unknown factors, such as lost bands.

Table 5. A Comparison of Recoveries in South Carolina to Recoveries Outside of South Carolina by Recovery Month (1931-1980).

Recovery Month	s.c.	Recoveries	Outside Recoveries
January		25	187
February		15	176
March		14	109
April		26	61
May		11	26
June		`33	25
July		45	11
August		77	11
September		23	9
October		12	30
November		11	58
December		<u>14</u>	<u> 197</u>
		306	900 =*1,206

^{* 19} recoveries had no month recorded and, therefore, were not included in the total.

^{*} Includes birds recovered under all conditions.

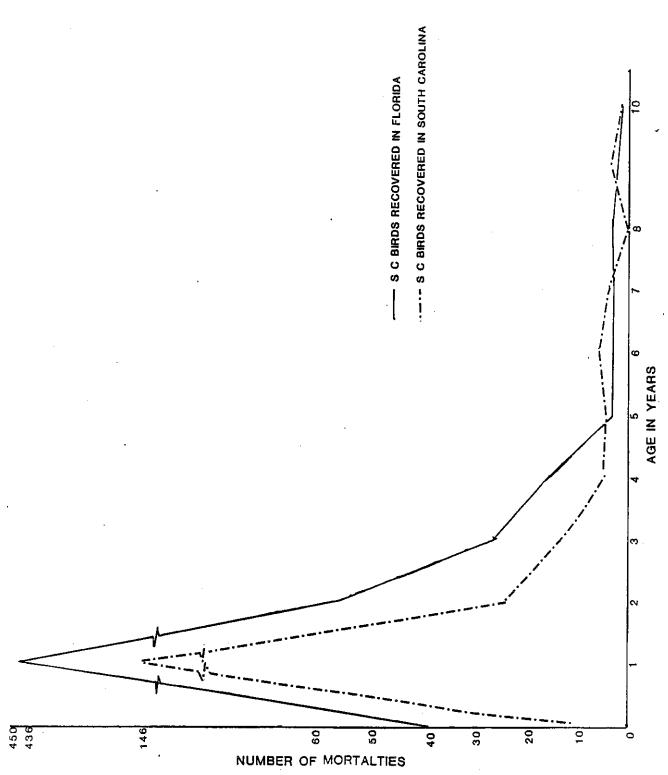


FIG.12 A comparison of band recovery rates of South Carolina banded pelicans in South Carolina and Florida by age class.

1340

7,61% recovery

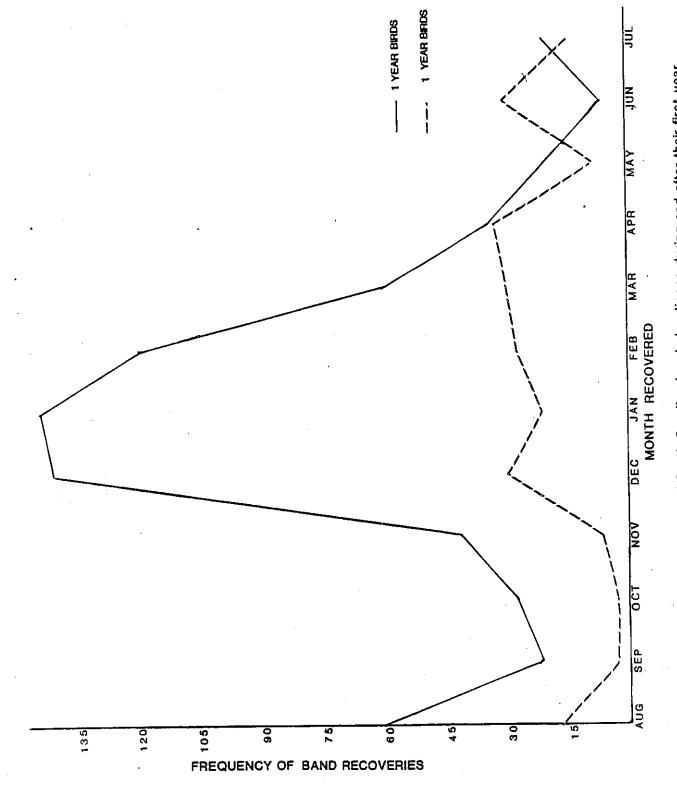


Fig.13 A comparison of band recoveries of South Carolina-banded pelicans during and after their first year by month recovered

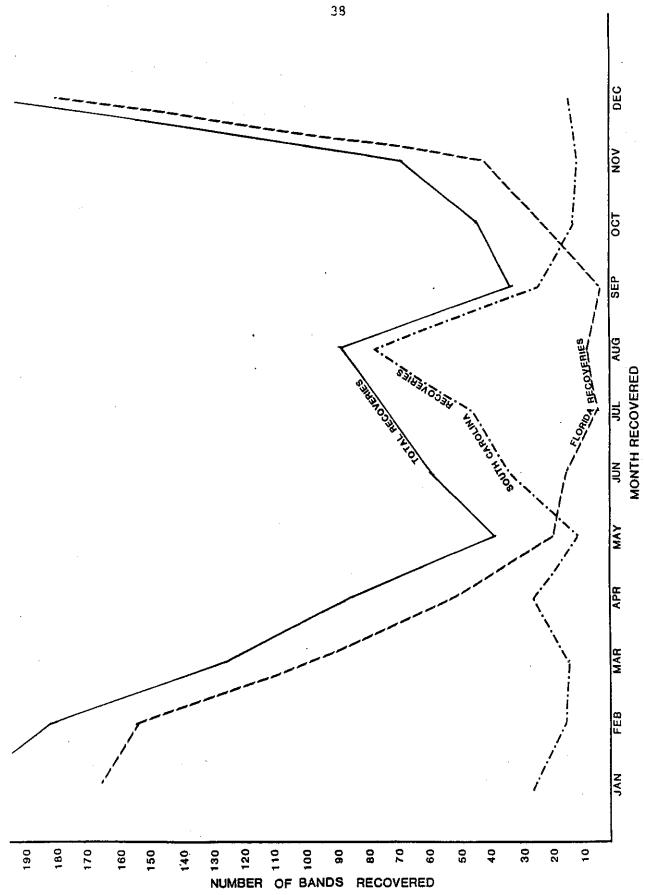


Fig.14 A comparison of band recoveries of South Carolina-banded pelicans in South Carolina and Florida by month recovered.

Feasibility of rocket-netting adult pelicans on loafing areas.

A. Influence of tides - The effects of tides were important considerations in the selection of rocket-netting locations and on pelican behavior and movements. The mean tide range in the study area was about 3.8 feet, and the spring tide range was about 4.4 feet (Nat. Ocean Survey, 1980).

The tide stage (low and high tides) had an important effect on the dispersal of loafing birds. Pelicans were less concentrated and their selection of loafing sites less predictable near low tide when numerous sandbars were exposed. Conversely, near high tide, when fewer areas were exposed, they were more concentrated and predictable in their selections of places to loaf.

Some sites were more suitable for rocket-netting than others because of the tides. Sandbars that were exposed briefly during low tide, but completely flooded at high tide, were frequently used by pelicans for loafing. However, we found it difficult to operate the rocket-net in these areas because timing was critical. The exposure time of most sandbars was insufficient to perform the following tasks: 1) set up the rocket-net system, 2) move away and allow birds to come in, 3) make a capture attempt, 4) perform the banding and marking operations, and 5) remove the capture equipment before it was awash. Further, sandbars of this type were seldom found near concealment.

Loafing sites on the lower strands of beaches appeared to be most promising for capturing pelicans. The lower strand is exposed by a normal low tide, but flooded by a normal high tide, and is typically associated with an upper strand and dune system just landward of it.

The rocket-net was positioned on the upper strand, just beyond the reach of high tide, and adjacent to a loafing site. From the nearby dune system, we could watch the capture site and detonate the rockets without being observed.

Certain aspects of the pelicans' behavior indicated the tide might be advantageous in moving birds within firing range of the rocket-net. When pelicans loafed, the flock would often disperse along the wash line near the edge of the water. The flock would move with the wash line as it moved landward due to the rising tide. On numerous occasions flocks of two or three pelicans to as many as 175 loafed near the rocket-net site. They would gradually move up the beach toward the net during the flood tide. The flock size would increase and decrease as birds came in and left. However, on only three occasions did even the nearest fringes of the flock move within range of the rocket-net. They appeared apprehensive of the net.

B. Timing- At morning's first light, pelicans flew north along the coast toward Winyah Bay. Shortly thereafter, flocks began loafing on or near their usual locations. Flock numbers increased and diminished as pelicans continually came in and left. Pelicans loafed during all stages of high and low tides

and during all times of the day. Pelicans were more concentrated and predictable in their selection of loafing sites during high tide. This behavior did not appear to be affected by the time of day. Rocket-netting attempts were timed to coincide with times near high tide.

When the rocket-net was set up where pelicans were already loafing, the birds would become frightened and fly away, often not returning before the net had to be removed. When the rocket-net was fired in the late evening, efforts were hampered by the birds' restlessness at that time of day. They were most apt to fly away at the slightest disturbance in the evenings. On the other hand, when the rocket-net was set up prior to daylight, when pelicans were not around, the birds were less wary and more apt to follow their usual behavioral patterns.

The tide phase (neap and spring tides) was an important consideration when selecting a time and a site for rocket-netting. There are areas not usually covered by tides that are inundated by spring tides. Spring tides can rise very rapidly, especially when pushed by an onshore wind. Under these circumstances, a rocket net and all the accompanying paraphernalia could become suddenly awash in breaking waves. Therefore, the most suitable time to net the birds was not when the tides were in the spring phase.

C. Rallying- When the rocket-net was set up where pelicans were already loafing, the birds would move, usually to a site nearby. In a situation like this, we tried to roust

them from their alternate loafing sites back to their original site.

Two methods were tried to drive the pelicans back to the capture site. First, we walked slowly toward the flock from a direction that would allow us to herd them toward the net. Our approach was indirect, casual, and nonthreatening. The birds became watchful, then alert, and finally, by twos and threes on the near side of the flock, they would fly. Usually they would either fly along the beach to the other side of the flock or go beyond the waves and alight on the water. When approached in an unhurried manner, a flock was sometimes moved several hundred yards. However, we were never able to move them to a position that would permit a capture attempt.

The other method used entailed approaching them in a boat until they flew. Their reactions to this type of harrassment were varied. Most often they would fly back and forth between two or three loafing sites. Seldom would they go to the intended location, and if they did they were unwilling to come close enough to the rocket-net for us to capture them.

D. Dummy Rockets - The pelicans' reluctance to approach the rocket-net may have been due to their unfamiliarity with the apparatus. The rocket-launchers and rockets are very conspicuous when placed on the stark beach.

In an attempt to get the birds accustomed to the rocket-netting paraphernalia, we constructed three sets of dummy rockets and launchers. The dummy sets were placed just

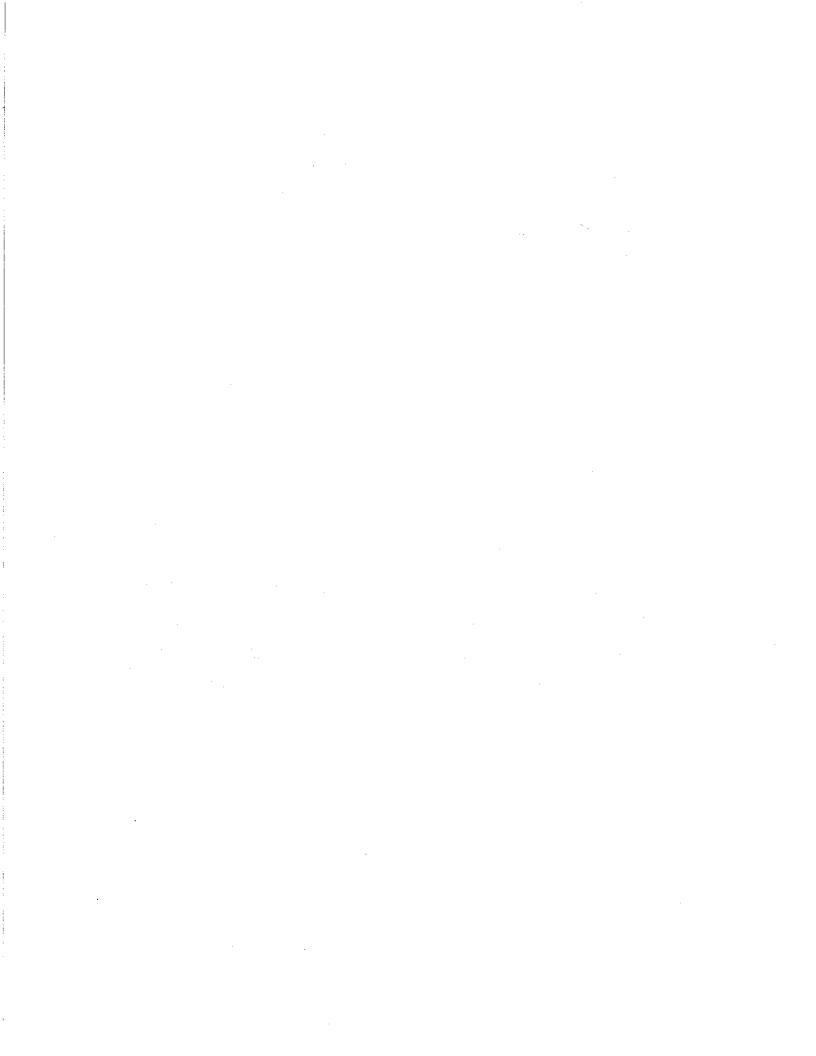
beyond the reach of the tide on three frequently used loafing When loafing pelicans appeared to be no longer wary of them, they were replaced by the real rocket-net system. When this was done, the birds would again draw back and avoid coming too near the rocket-net. Apparently they distinguished between the dummy and the real system very easily.

E. Decoys- Because the pelicans were frequently attracted to areas where other pelicans were already loafing, attempts were made to attract them to the rocket-net areas with wooden

Silhouette decoys have been used successfully by goose decoys. Life-sized, hunters to attract Canada, Blue and Snow Geese. silhouette decoys were designed, constructed from plywood, and painted to resemble pelicans.

The decoys were placed on sites frequented by loafing pelicans, without the distraction of the other rocket-netting apparatus. Pelicans appeared to be attracted to the decoys. However, when they came within close range (usually directly above the decoys), they looked carefully but moved Apparently the decoys were not realistic enough, but we still found this behavior encouraging.

A three-dimensional, full-sized decoy was carved and painted to resemble an adult pelican in summer plumage. decoy was tried once by itself and again with the silhouette decoys. From a distance, the pelicans found the decoys attractive. As they flew nearer, however, they appeared to



recognize the decoys and flew away without alighting.

Pelicans are very specialized feeders. They depend on their very keen eyesight to locate their food. Perhaps this enabled them to easily detect that the decoys were not real birds.

F. Baiting- Cannon and rocket-nets have been used successfully to capture many species of animals. In South Carolina they have been used regularly to capture wild turkeys (Meleagris gallopavo), white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) and waterfowl. In most cases the bait attracted the subject animals to within range of the netting system.

Suggestions that bait might attract pelicans considered. We observed commercial fishermen cleaning noncommercial fish from their nets, and on the beach without attracting pelicans. Pelicans will take handouts of fish around fishing piers and marinas but are probably conditioned to accept food in this manner. Many gulls (Larus sp.), terns (Sterna sp.) and occasionally a few pelicans follow shrimp boats and feed on some of the noncommercial species thrown overboard after each tow. In certain areas, they also follow crab fishermen as they visit their crab pots.

We selected one of the birds' regular loafing spots on the south tip of North Island for a bait site. Menhaden (Brevoortia tyrannus), a common food item was used as bait. These bait fish were placed above the wash line of the waves at a location near the loafing areas. Pelicans, terns and gulls

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were in the baited area, but they neither ate any of the bait placed on the beach nor appeared to find the bait attractive. Indications were that it is not feasible to rocket-net pelicans on loafing areas.

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MARK AND MONITOR JUVENILES

Sighting Returns

From 1978 through 1984 there were 413 sighting returns of pelicans that were specially marked as juveniles in South Carolina rookeries. There were several instances where different observers reported the same pelicans at the same locations. The most frequently reported observations were of wing-marked pelicans (n=387), but often observers noted when a bird was also banded. In most instances observers failed to report or reported incomplete marker numbers. However, the color of the marker and its location on the bird were frequently reported. The only sightings of interlocking bands were from our banding personnel who were looking for marked pelicans while conducting other surveys. Colored leg markers were also seldom reported and apparently were lost at a high rate. The colored wing markers were probably reported most frequently because they are easily seen. Their visibility was especially useful during aerial coastal surveys. These colored wing markers were helpful in determining early post-fledgling movement patterns.

Survival of these marked pelicans and/or their markers was low after the first winter. However, a general picture of juvenile movement patterns emerged from reported sightings.

Movements of Marked Juvenile Pelicans

The marked juveniles were observed shortly after fledging (August) in

flocks with adults both north and south of the rookeries along the coast. A few (n=11) were reported as far north as the Cape Fear River in North In late August sightings made during coastal surveys and other sighting reports indicated a general movement south along the South Carolina. In September most South Carolina coastal flight survey observations of marked juveniles were from the southern portion of the South Carolina Most reports received from Georgia indicated marked juveniles moved along the Georgia coast in September and October. Sighting Carolina coast. reports made in November and December were mostly from the northern or central east coast of Florida. Late winter and early spring reports indicated sightings were more numerous from the central east coast of Florida to the Florida Keys. In the spring most reports were still from Florida. Our earliest sighting of marked juveniles along the South Carolina coast was in May. Some marked juveniles remained in Florida during their first summer.

Nesting Sightings of Marked Pelicans of Known Age

There were 23 reported sighting recoveries of marked pelicans in South Carolina rookeries from which year class could be determined by their One marked pelican nested the summer after it hatched or at about one year of age. Two pelicans with markers nested as 2-year-olds, ten as markers. 3-year-olds, six as 4-year-olds and one as a 5-year-old. The 5-year-old had also nested as a 3-year-old. Three marked pelicans loafed on the rookeries

The one juvenile that nested was one of 41 marked pelicans of the same but did not associate with a nest.

year class reported during the nesting season in South Carolina, while the single marked 5-year-old observed nesting was the only marked pelican seen in its year class that year (1984). Pelicans in juvenile plumage were observed nesting, but they were estimated to represent less than .05 percent of the overall nesting effort each year.

Rookery Selection by Marked Pelicans

The markers seen in 63 sightings indicated the rookeries where the pelicans hatched. These sightings substantiated the belief the pelicans that nested on Deveaux Bank moved as a group to Bird-Key Stono when Deveaux Bank washed away in 1980. The 34 pelicans observed nesting on Bird-Key Stono, whose natal rookeries were known, either hatched on Deveaux Bank or Bird-Key Stono. There were two marked pelicans not associated with a nest that were observed loafing on Bird-Key Stono. These birds hatched on Marsh Island.

On Marsh Island there were 27 observations of pelicans whose markers determined natal rookeries. Twenty-six of the pelicans were associated with a nest, and they all hatched on Marsh Island. The remaining pelican was not associated with a nest, and it hatched on Bird-Key Stono.

Seasonal Distribution, Abundance, Westing Effort and Reproductive Success

Seasonal Abundance.-Formerly, the Eastern Brown Pelican was thought to be a summer resident only. The first midwinter record was established at Folly Island, on January 25, 1932 (Sprunt and Chamberlain, 1949).

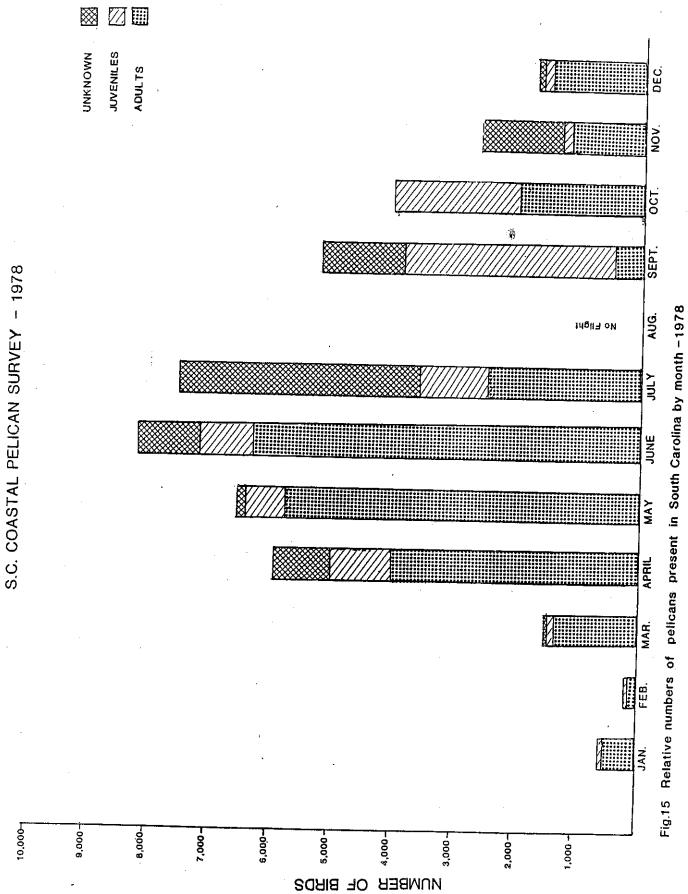
In 1948, local chapters of the Audubon Society in South Carolina began

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taking an annual bird population census during the Christmas season. When the number of birds seen on these "Christmas counts" is divided by a unit of effort, such as party hours spent afield, and the counts are averaged over 3-year periods, some indication of population trends may be obtained.

An analysis of the Audubon Christmas bird counts indicates almost no pelican sightings in midwinter until 1956. Three-year averages of pelicans counted since then indicate continuous midwinter sightings from 1956 until the present.

Aerial surveys to determine the seasonal abundance of pelicans utilizing South Carolina coastal waters (1978-1980) indicated variations in numbers and in age class compositions. (Fig. 15,16,17) The number of pelicans observed was lowest in January and February during each of the three survey years. During January, February and March pelicans in residence were predominantly adults. In April large numbers of adults returned to South Carolina. Pelican numbers peaked in May, June and July. June usually was the month with the highest counts if nestlings were not included. Although counts indicated only slightly lower numbers during August, September and October, there was apparently a large exodus of adults as the population was comprised of a relatively high ratio of juveniles. From November through February, numbers in the state declined.





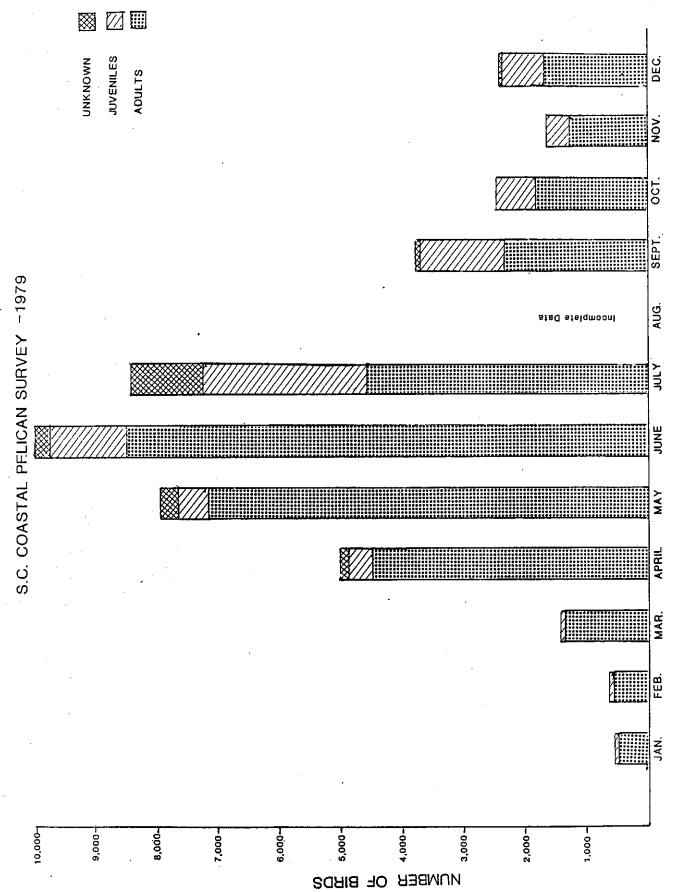


Fig.16 Relative numbers of pelicans present in South Carolina by month - 1979

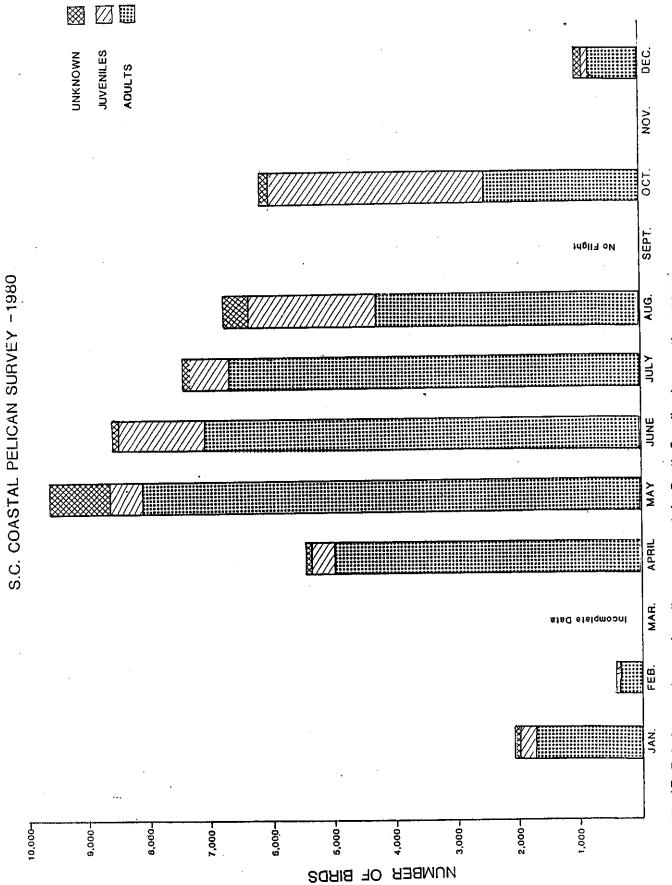
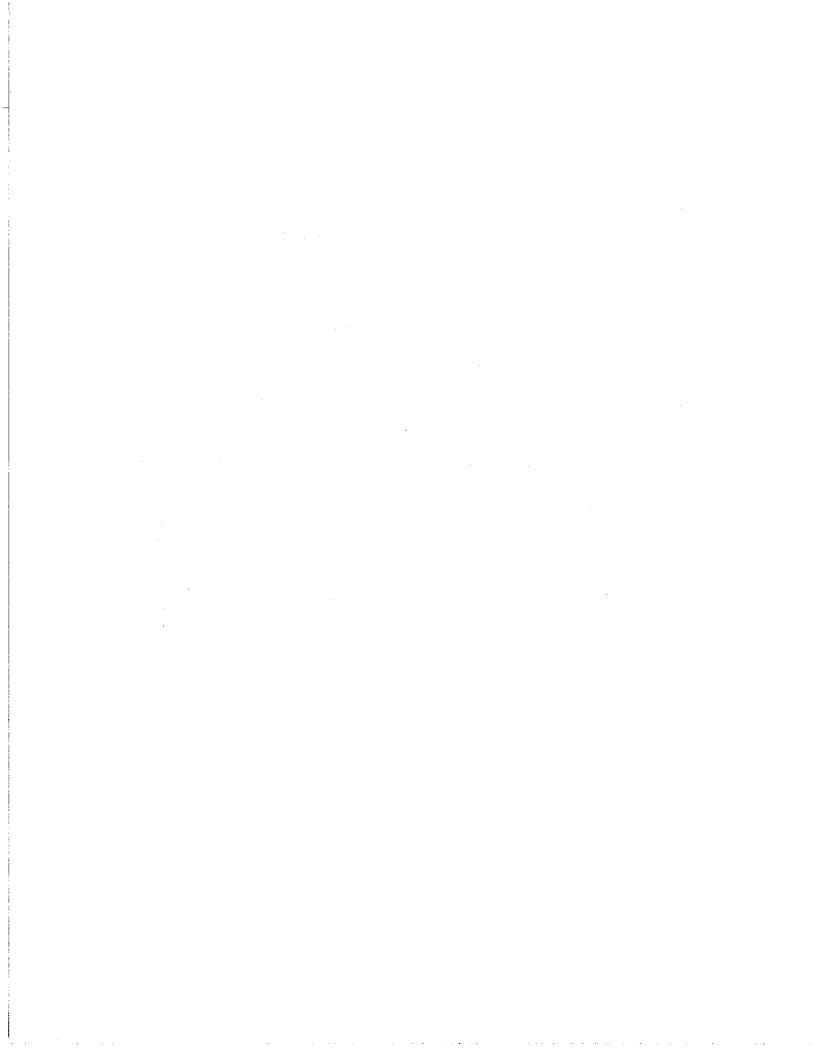


Fig. 17 Relative numbers of pelicans present in South Carolina by month - 1980



Seasonal Distribution -In January pelicans were evenly distributed along the South Carolina coast from Murrells Inlet to the Savannah River jetties. Most of the pelicans observed in the state during this time were adults (Fig. 18). The lowest numbers observed each year were during February (Fig. 19). During this time of year, pelicans were often located around tidal creeks, marinas and fish houses, sometimes accepting handouts. In March the number of pelicans began to increase along the South Carolina coast south of Charleston, and to some extent in the Bulls Bay area (Fig. 20). Pelican numbers steadily increased from March through July (Fig. 20-24). highest numbers during those months were near the rookeries. As the hatchlings' demands for food increased, large numbers of adults moved near the sounds and bays along the entire coast (Fig 23-25). In September pelican numbers began to diminish, and there appeared to be a southward movement (Fig. 26). The number of pelicans continued to diminish during the fall and winter as they moved south. (Fig. 18,19,27,28,29). Apparently many adults move south first, leaving a high ratio of juveniles in the state during late summer and early fall (Fig. 28).

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. Fig. 18 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in January.

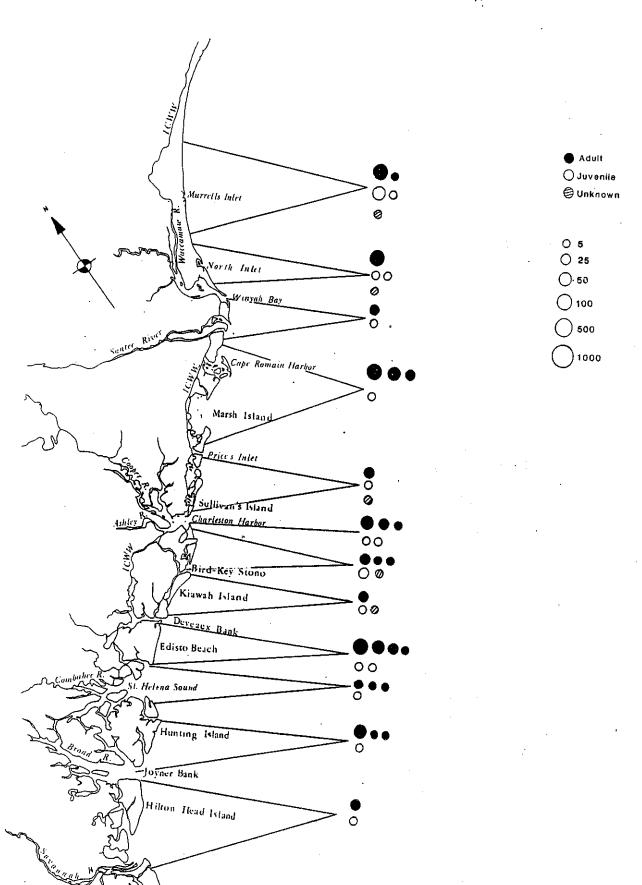
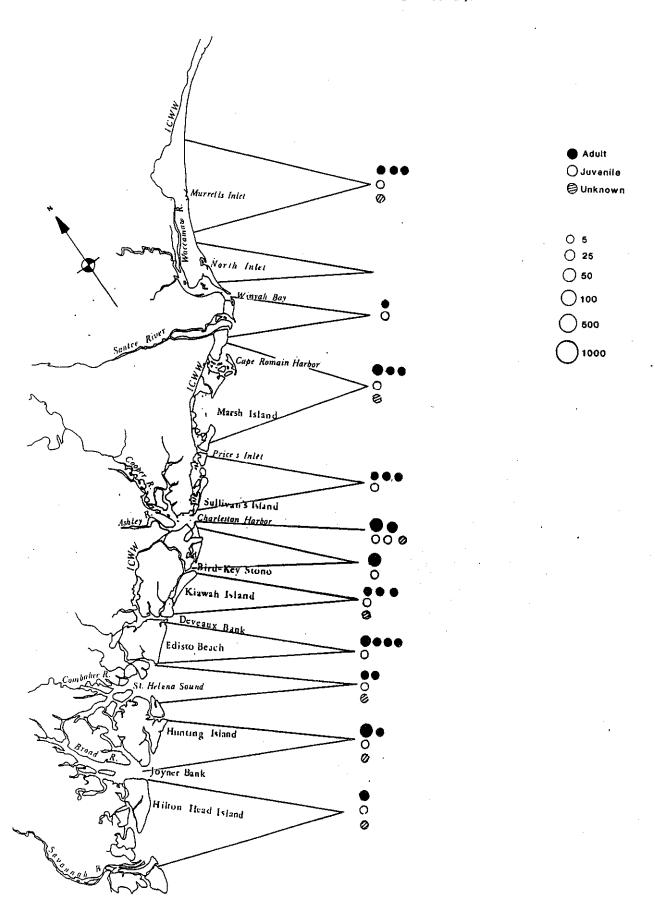


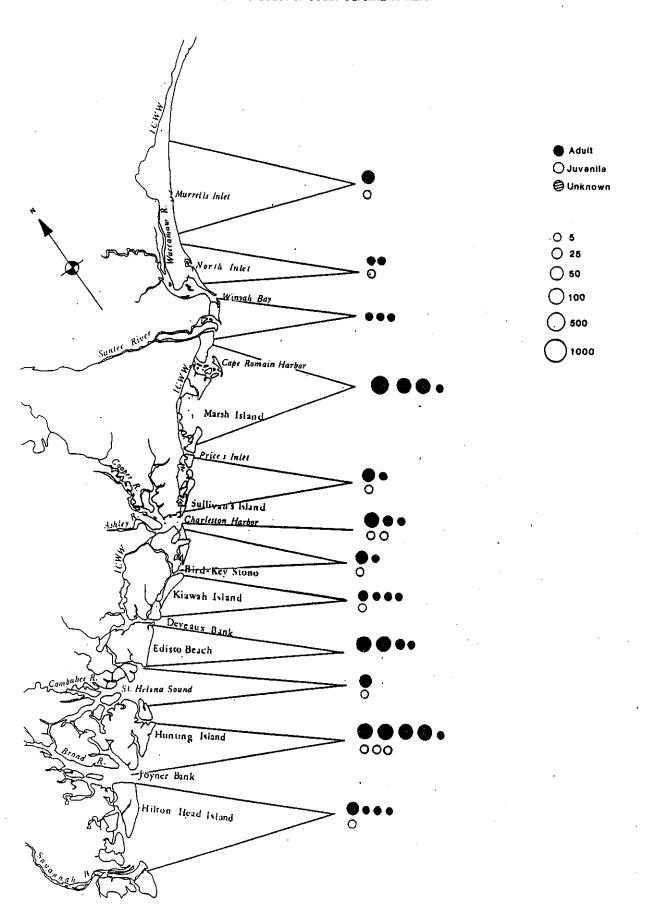


 Fig. 19 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in February.



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Fig. 20 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in March.



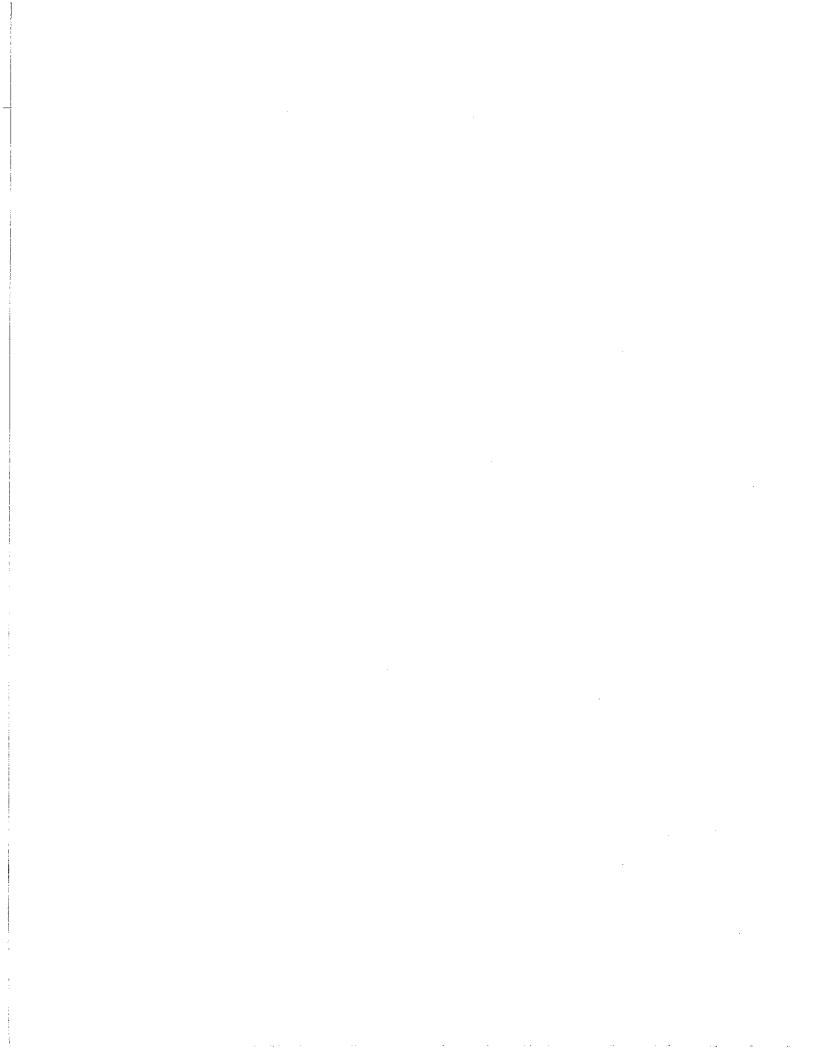


Fig. 21 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in April.

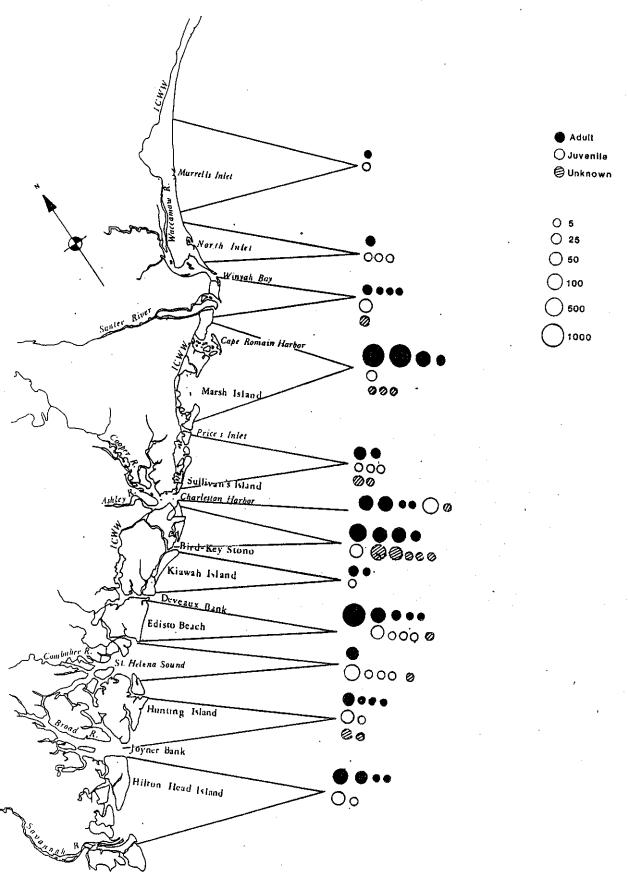




Fig. 22 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in May.

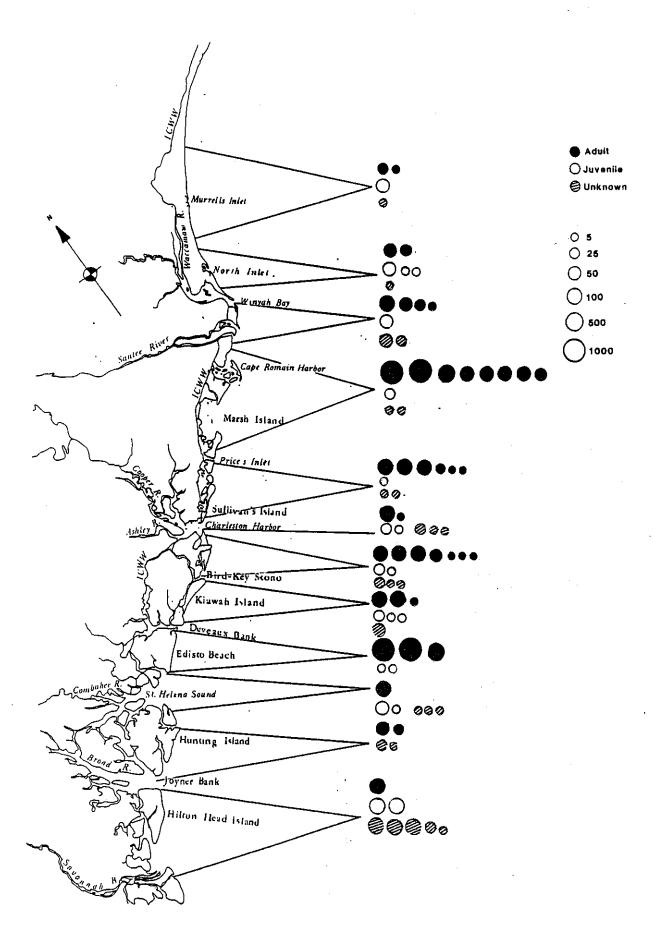
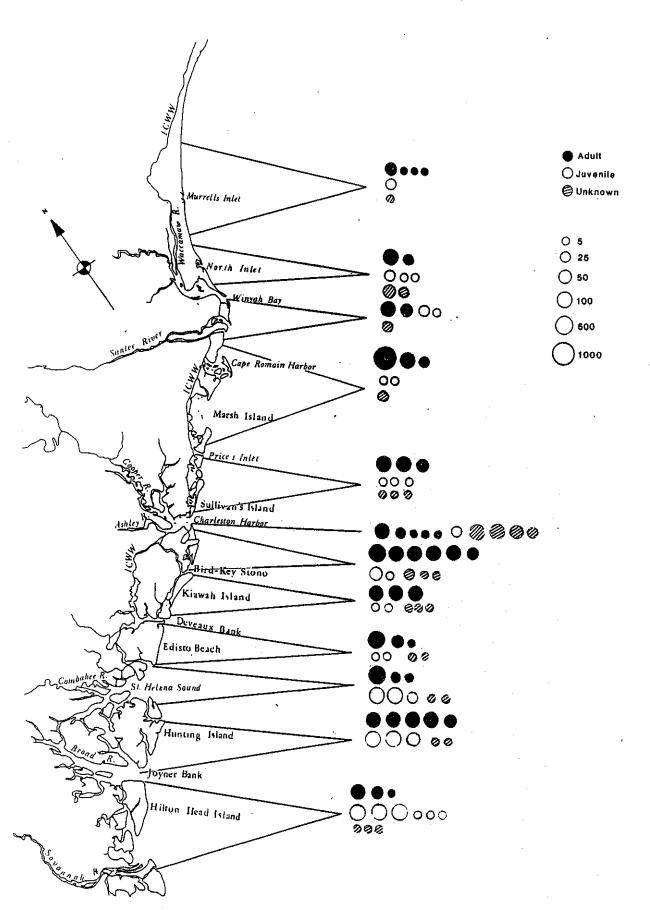




Fig. 23 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in June.



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Fig. 24 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in July.

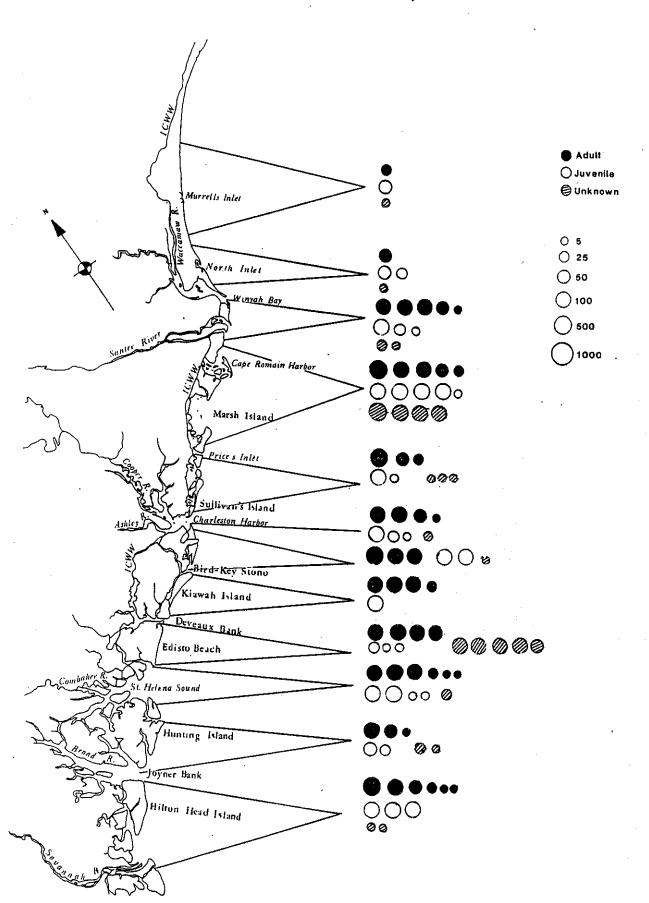


Fig. 25 Average (1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in August.

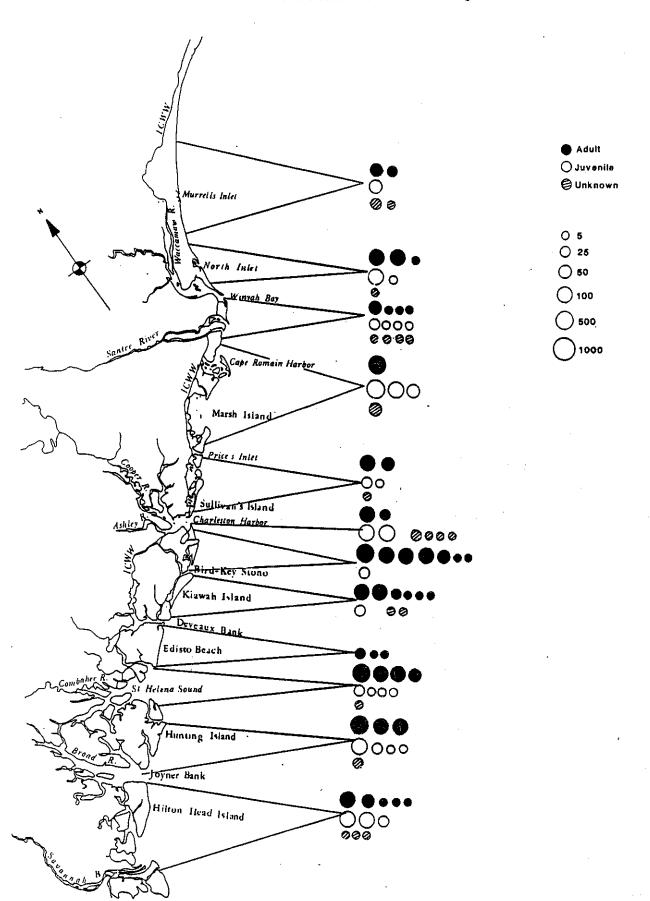
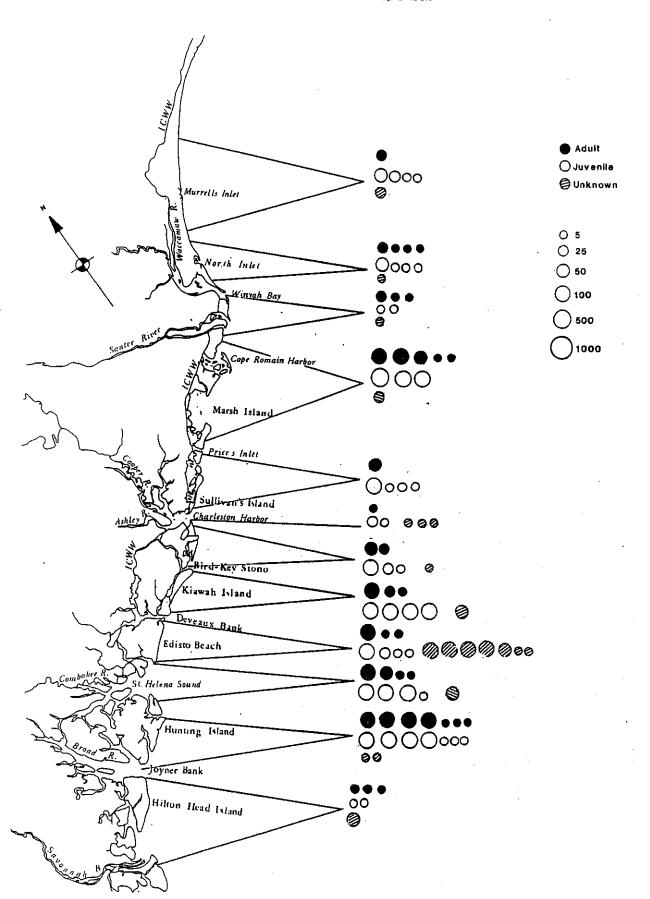




Fig. 26 Average (1976,1979.) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in September.



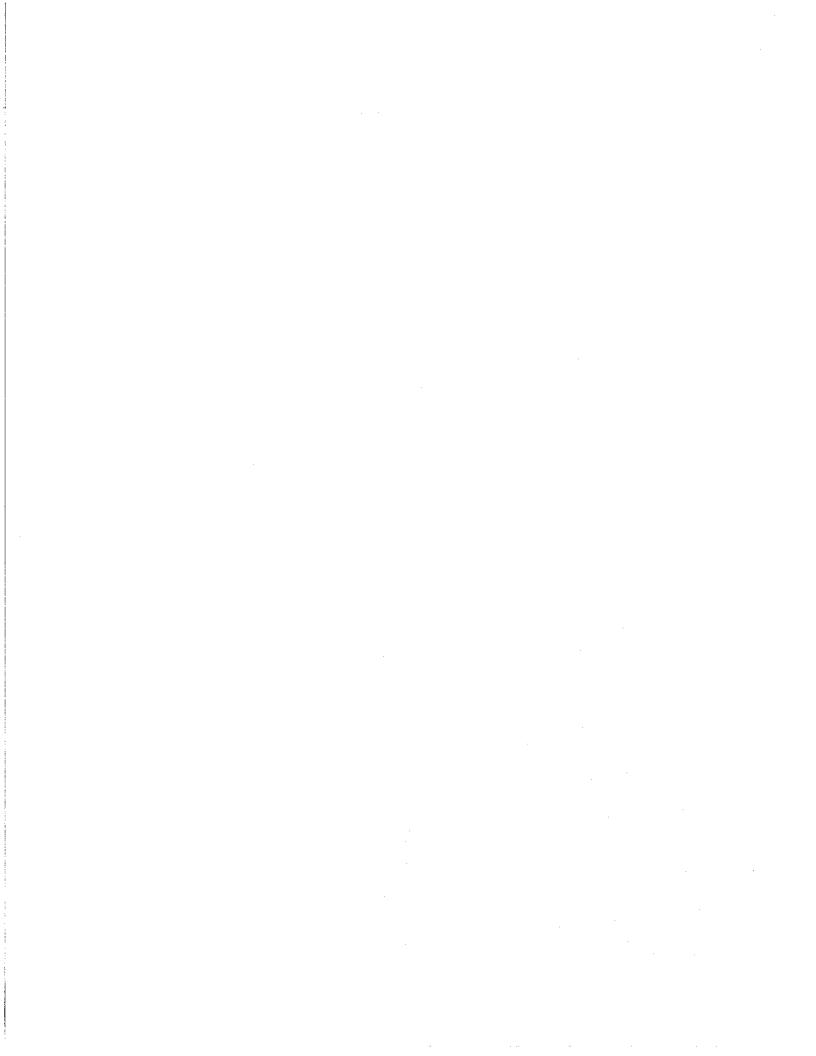
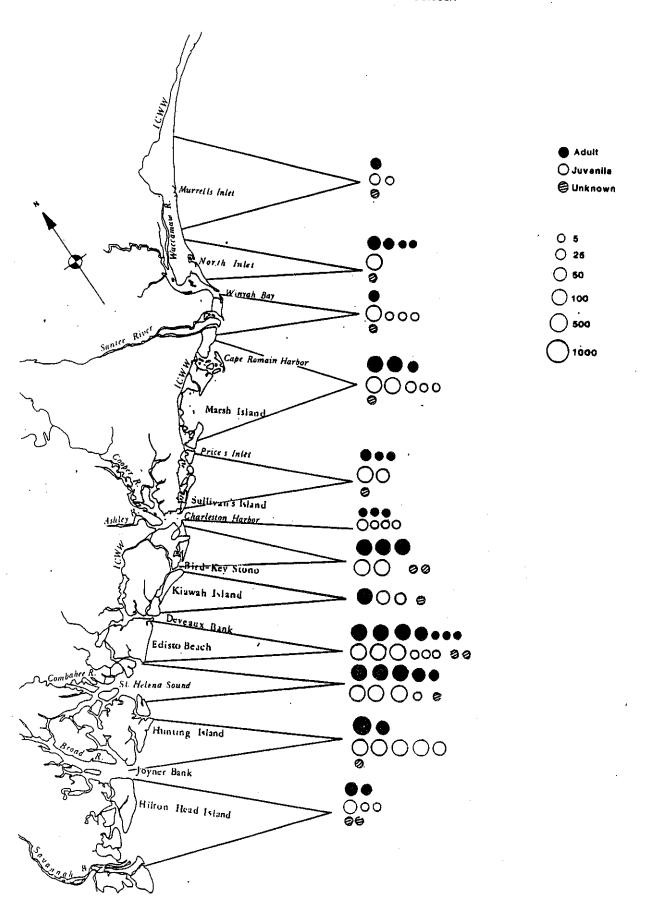


Fig. 27 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in October.



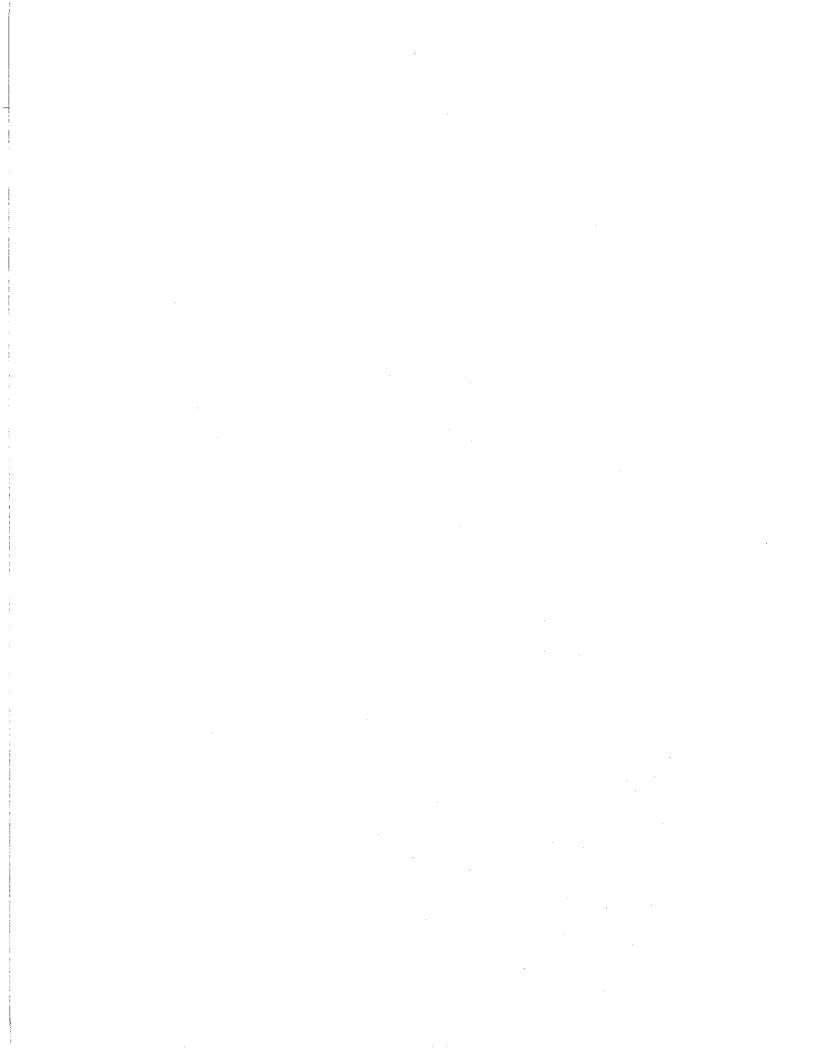
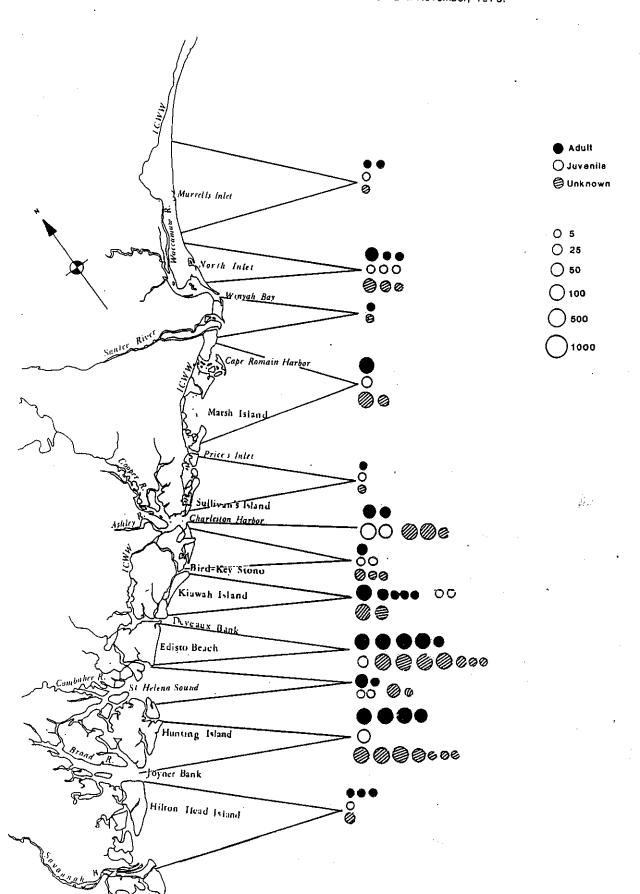
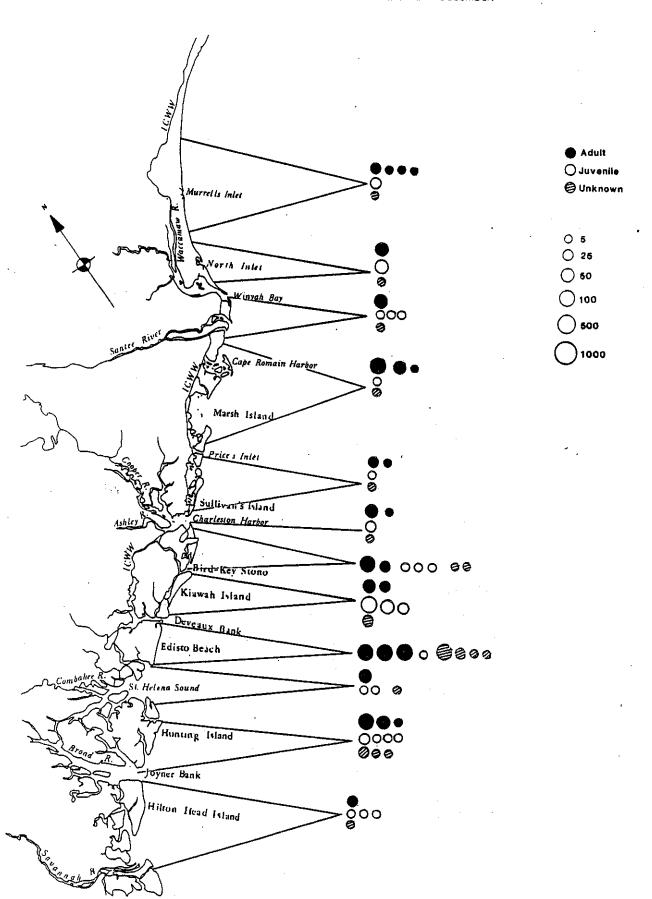


Fig. 28 Relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in November, 1979.



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Fig. 29 Average (1978,1979,1980) relative densities and distribution of the Eastern Brown Pelican on the coast of South Carolina in December.





Nesting Effort and Reproductive Success - Pelican nesting effort and fledgling success have been monitored to some degree since 1940 in the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge.

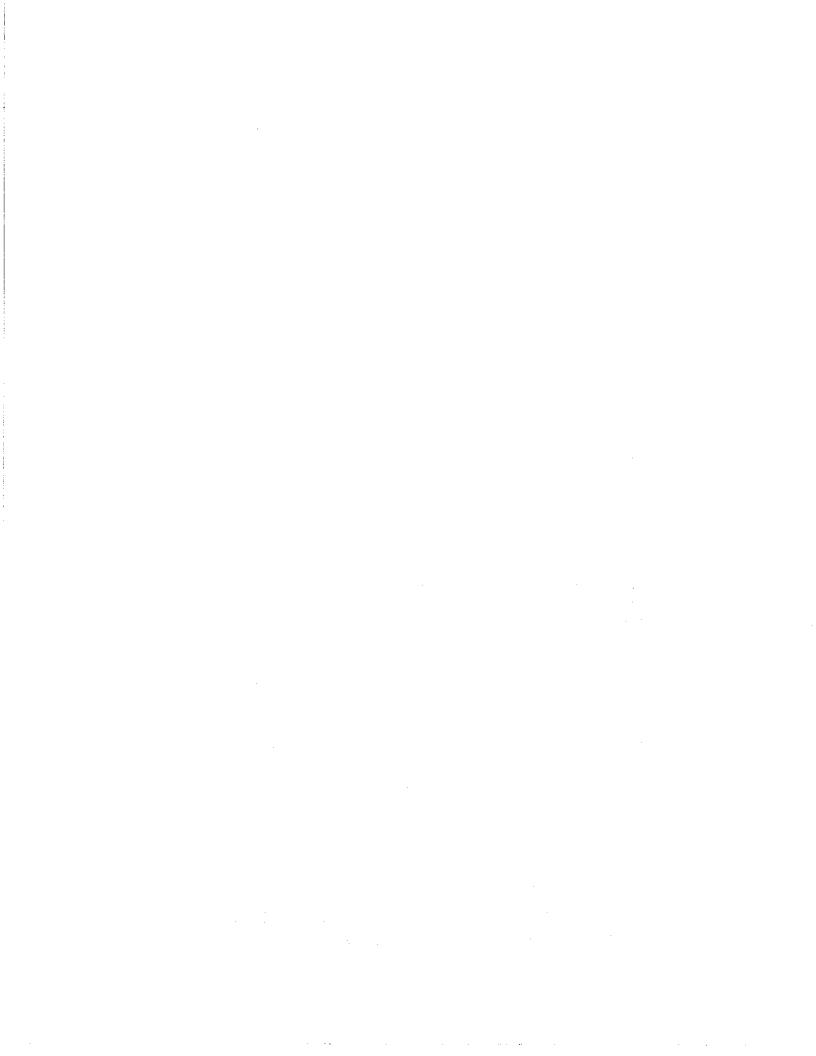
Pelican nesting and fledgling counts in South Carolina were confined to the Bulls Bay rookeries until the early 1960s. More extensive counts were made in the 1960s that include all the pelican rookeries in the state. These counts were done by different individuals, and there were no standardized methods of counting or record keeping. In the 1970s more attention was given to a standard method of counting the South Carolina pelicans' nesting and fledging success.

Pelican nest counts were made by the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department from aerial photographs taken from various types of rotary-wing aircrafts at different altitudes. Counts were also made of nests during rookery walk-through observations. The aerial photographic counts and ground walk-through counts were about equally accurate.

The aerial photography method appeared to cause less disturbance to nesting pelicans than the ground counts when the photography was conducted above 200 feet. Effects of disturbance from ground counts appeared to be minimized if counts were conducted during the cooler times of the day.

Pelican nesting counts conducted in South Carolna since 1970 (n=1116) have shown a general increase in the pelican nesting effort in South Carolina from that time until the present (n=5100) (Table 6).

Fledgling success has also shown a similar increase during the same period. The lowest fledgling success was in 1970 (n=945) and the highest in 1984 (n=6700) During the summer of 1983 a coastal storm caused nesting areas to erode and high fledgling mortality (Table 6).



Nests

Totals

Pelican Nesting Efforts and Fledgling Success in South Carolina Rookeries 1970-1984. Table 6.

	Rookery	Cape Romain Bulls Bay # Nests	Deveaux Bk. North Edisto River # Nests	Bird-Key Stono # Nests # Fledge
	1970	637 500	479	
	1970 1971	1094 949	375 400	
)	1972	763 514	652 456	
	1973	836 1082	810 1644	
	1974	920 825	750	- '
)	1975	921 530	1500	
	1976	1440	1100 1738	
	1977	1678	1698 635	
	1978	3244 4541	1274	
	1979	2463 2872	1773	
	1980	2725 1974		2621 4150
	1981	2815 2585		2971 4039
	1982	3402 2611		3251 3700
	1983	2880 1540		2039
	1984	2300 2500		2600



DISCUSSION

Capturing and banding large numbers of adult pelicans on from rookeries proved to be both difficult and unrewarding. The rocket-net system can be most effective when used under the following conditions: It is set up and left on the site until the animals become accustomed to it, 2) it is well-disguised, 3) animals can be lured to the capture site by bait or the animals' presence in a relatively small area can be predicted in a narrow time range. None of these criteria were met in our attempts to capture loafing pelicans during this study. The tide, waves and wind shifted the sand on most loafing areas used by pelicans (excluding rookeries) in South Carolina, making it infeasible to leave the rocket-net set up for more than several hours. Therefore, it had to be set up and removed daily. Probably this kept it from being in a specific location long enough for the birds to accept it as part of the landscape. The stark beach terrain made camouflaging the rocket-net system difficult.

We believe the rocket-net could be used successfully to catch adult pelicans in the rockeries, but we decided not to try this method since the species was endangered at that time.

We were successful in marking and banding preflight pelicans in the rookeries. However, large numbers had to be marked because of the low first year survival rates of pelicans and high predicted losses of the marking devices before the birds became adults.

The trends from marked pelican recoveries, banding analyses and monthly aerial surveys were consistent and indicated a similar pattern of seasonal

abundance in South Carolina, direction of movements, season of mortality, and age that mortality most often occurs.

Most pelicans banded in South Carolina were recovered in the winter of their first year on the east coast of Florida. The highest mortality rates are in December, January, February and March, and the lowest are in May, September and October. The band recovery rate in South Carolina exceeds recoveries outside the state during June, July, August and September. These trends indicate pelicans, in this age class, spend their summers in South Carolina primarily to nest. In early fall they move south, and they winter primarily in Florida. They begin to move back into South Carolina in the spring and their numbers peak in May, June and July.

A pattern of similar movements emerged from returns on After fledging, there was a gradual movement away from the juveniles. rookeries to points north and south along the coast. Later they move southward. The earliest sightings of wing markers in Florida was in mid-September. In late fall, winter and spring, most sightings were in Florida. Sightings during the summer months were more numerous in South Carolina. Limited sighting recoveries of pelicans that retained their markers until they reached nesting age indicated an extremely high fidelity to their natal rookeries. From sightings of birds marked to indicate their rookery of origin, it appeared that pelicans utilizing the Deveaux Bank rookery moved as a group to Bird-Key Stono when the Deveaux Bank washed away.

Seasonal population trends that were determined from coastal aerial surveys complemented information obtained from band and marker recoveries.

After nesting duties are completed in late summer, adults begin moving

south, and total numbers in the state begin to drop. Sometimes in early fall there was a greater number of juveniles in the state than adults. In December, January and February pelican numbers continue to decline. However, a small number, mostly adults, remains in the state. In March the number of pelicans in South Carolina begins to increase and continues to do so until midsummer.

Apparently South Carolina is primarily a nesting area for the brown pelican. Areas further south, especially Florida, are wintering areas. An abundant food source for nesting pelicans in South Carolina's near-shore waters is indicated by the large size of the South Carolina pelican rookeries.

The number of nesting pelicans reached a low point in the late 1960s. Earlier counts are not comparable because there is no indication that records of statewide counts were kept. From the early 1970s to 1984, the number of pelican nests in South Carolina generally continued to increase. A review of pelican nesting efforts in both North Carolina (James Parnell pers. comm.) and Florida (Steve Nesbitt pers. comm.) indicates increased nesting in South Carolina has not been at the expense of these other states. North Carolina's nesting pelican population has continued to increase along with South Carolina's and is presently at an all-time high. Nesting in Florida has also been up, though not as drastically as in South Carolina and North Carolina.

Pelican reproductive success has steadily increased in South Carolina since 1970, except for losses of nests and prefledglings caused by natural weather perturbations. The number of nesting pairs has increased from 1,116 in 1970 to 6,653 in 1982. Thus it is easy to be optimistic about the

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immediate future of brown pelicans in South Carolina. The increase in nesting alone indicates the brown pelican is doing extremely well as a breeder in South Carolina. However, their nesting is limited to three existing coastal island sites. In the winter and spring of 1982-1983, approximately three-fourths of the nesting area of one of these rookeries was lost due to erosion. A significant reduction in fledgling production during the summer of 1983 resulted.

Pelicans normally are ground nesters on small, isolated coastal islands in South Carolina. Severe erosion from storm tides is a continued threat to these islands. Fortunately the nesting habitat on Bird-Key Stono was restored. Dredging spoil was deposited on the island through the cooperative efforts of the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

There is a strong need to continue monitoring pelican population levels and reproductive success in South Carolina. This would ensure our awareness of population trends and rookery conditions and our ability to react to any new problems.

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APPENDIX I

A Partial Pelican Bibliography

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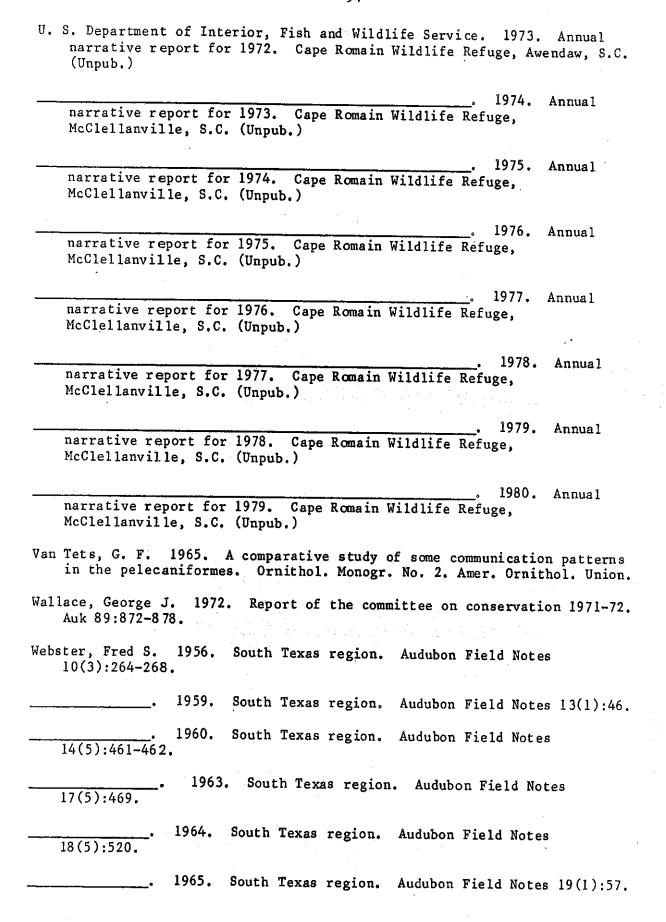
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Submitted by:

Reviewed by:

Thomas S. Kohlsaat, Supervisor Nongame and Heritage Trust Section

Approved by:

SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE AND MARINE RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

W. Brock Conrad, Jr., Director Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries